

**DEEP FRAMES, WHITE MEN'S DISCOURSE, AND BLACK FEMALE
BODIES**

A Dissertation

by

BRITTANY CHEVON SLATTON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

Major Subject: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Deep Frames, White Men's Discourse, and Black Female Bodies. (August 2009)

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In this qualitative study, I examine the persistent trend of black women as an excluded relationship partner for white men. Integral to understanding the exclusion of black women as relationship partners is the construction of black female bodies, by influential white men historically and contemporarily, as the abject opposite of hegemonic femininity, which holds “middle-class, heterosexual, [w]hite femininity” as the norm (Collins 2005:193). This construction essentially places black women outside the bounds of hegemonic femininity, beauty, sexuality, and womanhood. Using the theoretical concept *deep frame*, which is the “conceptual infrastructure of the mind” (Lakoff 2006a:12) and representative of one's commonsense world view, I argue that the ways in which influential white men have constructed black female bodies is a critical component of the raced, gendered, and classed deep frame of white men. This deep frame undergirds how many white men perceive, interpret, understand, emote, and engage in actions where black women are concerned. Hence in this study, I qualitatively examine, through analyzing and interpreting the in-depth online questionnaires of 134

white male respondents, how the deep frame of white men affects how they perceive black women and ultimately the relationships they seek with black women.

The results of the study show that many white male respondents, despite most having very limited or no personal interactions with black women, viewed black women through the one-dimensional lens of the raced, gendered, and classed deep frame. Many respondents perceived black women as unattractive unless capable of a white normative standard, as possessing a negative “black” culture, and as possessing negative and “unfeminine” attributes that make them complicit in their own rejection. These findings show how the deep frame disciplines white men to view black women as “out of bounds” as legitimate relationship partners, and disciplines the types of relationships they seek with black women. The results of this study also reveal that the conceptual approach of deep frame rooted in an understanding of the power of influential white men to control and construct society provides a theoretical alternative to the outmoded interracial marriage theories of caste and exchange.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: ANALYZING WHITE MEN'S DISCOURSE PERTAINING
TO BLACK WOMEN

Visiting a small posh restaurant in my local town, I decided to take a lunch by myself. While sitting at the table reading a book on African American women and waiting for my after lunch dessert to arrive, I was approached by a white woman, the co-owner of the restaurant, who thanked me for visiting the restaurant and implored about the service I received. Upon seeing my book sitting in my lap, she asked me what I was reading. I showed her my text and we began a discussion about the experiences of African American women in institutions of higher education. I told her, based on my personal experiences in a doctoral program at a predominantly white university, supplemented with my knowledge of the experiences of other black women in graduate school at the university, that it was becoming more difficult to meet and form a relationships with a black male and that so many black women were single and scared that they may never marry. She then proclaimed, quite confidently, that black women working on graduate or professional degrees would just marry the men that they come in contact within their degree program or later on in their job; white men (and Asian American men). I was stunned by her comment, and I began to think about the statistics of black women, even those that move up in their professions, who marry white men.

This dissertation follows the style of *American Sociological Review*.

Black women are not marrying white men in significant numbers. In fact, black women have the lowest marriage rate and are not marrying much at all in today's society, let alone interracial marriages.

WHY STUDY WHITE MEN'S DISCOURSE PERTAINING TO BLACK WOMEN?

In considering heterosexual relationships, black women are the least likely group of men and women to marry, regardless of educational background. The low marriage rate of black women is exacerbated by the fact that black women do not have an interracial marriage rate with white men or other men of color at any significant rate. Analysis of census research over time identifies this persistent trend in black-white intermarriage, which is that black women continue to have the lowest intermarriage rates among groups of color. Additionally, a myriad of interracial dating studies have quantitatively identified that white men overwhelmingly exclude black women as a dating option. Thus, a long-standing persistent trend exists of black women as an excluded heterosexual relationship partner for white men and other men of color. Integral to understanding the exclusion of black women as relationship partners is the overarching, intersecting gendered, racialized, and classed views of black women, prevalent in dominant discourse, as the abject opposite of hegemonic femininity which holds "middle-class, heterosexual, [w]hite femininity" as the irretrievable norm (Collins 2005:193). The dominantly held societal views of black women –or the construction of black female bodies, rooted in the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class, are at odds with hegemonic white femininity and ultimately the way that black female

bodies are constructed societally, affects how black women are viewed by all men in society, particularly white men. Elite white males, from a historical and contemporary perspective, have been the catalyst in constructing black female bodies as oppositional to white women and have the power to influence how all whites as well as people of color view and perceive black women.

Thus, in this study, I examine how and why black women are such an excluded potential relationship partner for white men (which can then be extended to understanding how black women have generally been excluded by other racial groups of color as potential options). Through qualitatively examining the thoughts, opinions, and perceptions of white men regarding black women today, I explicate how these perceptions affect black-white interracial relationships as well as how white men's perceptions are central to understanding how black women are generally perceived in society, which impacts the way other groups perceive and interact with black women. I address the following broad research questions in the study:

1. How do white men perceive black women?
 - a. Personality
 - b. Physically
 - c. Sexually
 - d. Femininity
2. How do white men perceive of black women as romantic dating/marriage options?
3. What type of interactions have white men had, or do they seek with black women?

I approach this research methodologically, by critically analyzing the dominant discourses, “language as a social practice determined by social structures” (Fairclough

1989: 17) white men use regarding black women, white men's use of descriptive visual imagery, their use of narrative stories, their expression of emotions, and the type of actions or practices they engage in regarding black women. Central to analyzing this research, is understanding that the ways in which white men (and other men of color) think about, perceive, understand, emotionally react to, and view black women is rooted in a long-standing, white constructed, racialized, gendered, and classed deep framing of society. This is a framing of society defined and maintained by whites that privileges whites in not only a tangible manner, but also in terms of thoughts and perspectives, in which their thoughts and interpretations, including notions of beauty, femininity, and worthiness represent the ideal or norm, white norm, that all others need acquiesce to. Thus the opinions, thoughts, and perspectives white men often have regarding black women are not simply neutral or objective "opinions," (Van Dijk 1991) but are recitations of dominant discourses central to the white constructed, deep racialized, gendered, and classed frame through which they understand and view black women and society. This understanding and viewing of black women is often representative of the racialized, gendered, and classed way in which black female bodies have been constructed, a fundamental component to the deep frame. The predominance and perpetuation of dominant discourses relevant to that deep frame of understanding aids in maintaining, legitimizing, and reproducing the deep frame and thus continues to re-inscribe the dominance and power of the dominant group.

Principally, I analyze white men's perspectives on black women as opposed to analyzing black women's perspectives or both white men and black women's

perspectives. Notably a study by Erica Childs (2005) examines interracial marriage from black women's standpoint. This research provides important data on how black women view intermarriage with white men, finding black women's views on intermarriage are based on their historical knowledge and current experiences with racism and their belief that they are devalued as black women in American society. Essentially, Child's study reveals that black women are aware of the racialized, gendered, and classed deep framing of society that perpetuates them as a devalued black female body. However, in this study, I focus imperatively on the thoughts and views of white men—the deep frame through which white men understand black women— because this continues to be a society in which white men are the dominant group possessing status, power and control over the hegemonic stance of society. Thus, they have an invested interest in maintaining the status quo that places them at the top of a raced, gendered, and classed hierarchy and white women at the top of the hierarchy of women. The racialized, gendered, and classed lens through which many white men view and perceive black women, including the discourses white men employ and their emotional reactions to black women, greatly impacts the relationships that black women and white men will form. Moreover, the construction of black female bodies, central to the, white constructed, long-standing deep frame, not only impacts white men's perceptions, but also how men of racial groups of color perceive black women, thus affecting other types of interracial relationships black women may form, in addition, impacting black intraracial relationships.

The following sections of this chapter provide the background and context of the study, including an analysis of black women's interracial marriage trends, over time, an overview of the chief findings in interracial dating studies, which give a breakdown of white men's racial preferences and exclusions in dating, and an analysis of anti-miscegenation history as it relates to blacks women and white men. The extensive overview of black women's exclusion in interracial dating and marriage provides the material reality of how the racialized, gendered, and at times classed construction of black female bodies affects black women in the heterosexual relationship sphere. I also provide a critical discussion of the limitations of current theories and studies used to explain interracial dating and marriage trends and an introduction of the critical theories of intersecting oppressions and deep frames as important conceptual frameworks for understanding the phenomenon in this study.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Black Women's Interracial Dating and Marriage Trends

Black women have the lowest interracial marriage rate of all women, except white women. The percentage of black women in interracial marriages has increased, minimally, over the last several decades. In 1970, around 1% of Black women were married interracially and by 2000, 4.1% were in interracial marriages. Of the black women who are in interracial marriages, a larger percentage is "foreign-born" black women and not American born black women. In contrast, other women of color intermarry at substantially higher rates, with 57.6% of American Indian women, 21.6 percent of Asian women, 45.8% of Hawaiian women, (Lee and Edmonston 2005), and

30.7% of Latina women (Qian and Lichter 2007) in interracial marriages in 2000. Black women thus have the lowest intermarriage rates of all racial groups of color.

Studies that analyze census data reveal that being black, particularly a black woman, affects the likelihood of intermarriage with whites (and with other racial groups). Although black-white interracial marriages have increased more swiftly in the 1990s, it remains relatively low in comparison to the intermarriage rates of whites with other racial groups of color (Qian and Litcher 2007; Lee and Edmonston 2005). When specifically analyzing black women, their interracial marriage rate with whites is less significant than black men, with only 116,000 of the total 395,000 black-white marriages in 2002 (US Bureau of the Census 2004), consisting of black women and white men. In analyzing the intermarriage rate from 1990 to 2000, it was more significant for black men than black women, with black men, across all educational attainment levels, increasing their intermarriage rate from 6 to 8.5 percentage points, whereas black women's intermarriage rate, across all educational levels, only increased between 1.6 to 2.2 percentage points. Research typically shows that an increase in educational attainment has a propensity to lead to greater intermarriage rates, however, this data shows that an increase in education does not result in a significant increase in intermarriage for blacks (Qian and Litcher 2007), specifically black women. Blacks, even with a college education and middle class background, are far more likely than other racial groups of color to be socially segregated from whites in residential neighborhoods and schools (Iceland, Weinberg, and Steinmetz 2002). Additionally, black women do not have a noteworthy percentage of intermarriage with other men of

color. White women, however, hold statistically significant intermarriage rates with men of all racial backgrounds. The 2000 census statistics show that interracial marriages with white wives made up 29% of all interracial marriages. These marriages consisted of white women married to multiple race men at 12%, to “some other race men” (majority list Hispanic as ethnicity) at 9%, and Black men at 8% (Lee and Edmonston 2005).

This census data shows a distinct and persistent trend over time, that black women are not intermarrying in significant rates with white men or men of other racial groups and that black women-white men marriage is not as positively influenced by education and class status as other forms of intermarriage with whites. A look at the literature on interracial dating trends and preferences also shows that black women (and blacks in general) are a severely excluded dating group. Much of the interracial dating literature analyzes the dating preferences of various racial groups, through examining the inclusion/exclusion of racial groups on dating advertisement websites and other mediums. One study of interracial dating by Yancey (2007a) measured symbolic racism, those who “hide racist inclinations by taking symbolic stances on racial issues,” as a way to hide personal racism by stating non-racial reasons for choosing not to date interracially. This study examines how white internet dater’s religious views and conservative political ideology, which have long been connected to racist ideas, affects their likelihood for interracial dating. The study finds that whites with conservative political views are open to interracial dating, yet not with blacks, as they overwhelmingly exclude blacks as dating options. And those with strong religious views were unwilling to date interracially, regardless of racial or ethnic group (Yancey 2007a).

A study by Phua and Kaufman (2003) also found in their analysis of personal internet advertisements, for people seeking partners, that blacks were the least preferred racial group and whites the most preferred racial group. The majority of the advertisers in the study across all racial backgrounds “prefer either their own race or [w]hites, and least prefer [b]lacks, regardless of sexual orientation” (P. 991).

A study by Feliciano, Robnett, and Komaie (2008), also supports these findings. The study finds distinct gender differences in the online dating preferences for white men and white women. White men are more likely to be open to dating outside of their race than white women, as white women tend to list a “whites only” racial preference more than men. Both white women and white men are highly likely to exclude blacks as dating preference, however, white men are over two and half times more likely to exclude black women as a racial preference than white women are to exclude black men. The study finds that of the white men who specified a racial preference, 93% excluded black women, which is the most excluded racial group for white men. Despite the fact that white men are more likely to date outside their race than white women and thus less likely to choose a racial preference in dating advertisements (Feliciano, Robnett, and Komaie 2008; Phua and Kaufman 2003), this “openness” to interracial dating is largely exclusive to non-black women. In terms of demographic trends, Feliciano (et al. 2008) find that white men who are religious are four times more likely to exclude black women and white men who are educated are five times more likely to exclude black women as a dating preference, partially supporting the results of Yancey’s earlier mentioned study.

Overview of Anti-Intermarriage History

In examining the exclusion of black women as dating options by white men and black women's low intermarriage rate with white men, of importance is the extensive anti-intermarriage history as it relates to black-white unions. From a historical perspective there has been a long American history of black women-white men non-consensual as well as some consensual sexual unions and the historical regulation of these unions has been rather dissimilar from the regulation of black men-white women relationships. At the start of new colonies, early Virginia laws, before the 1660s, focused mainly on illegal sex, fornication or adultery, as opposed to the banning of interracial sex. Although, no clear legal ban against interracial sex, some instances of "public condemnation" against those involved in interracial sexual unions. However, the punishment for those involved in interracial sex was in most instances the same punishment for those who engaged in fornication, adulteration, and or had children out of wedlock. This punishment usually resulted in the paying of a fine, seeking penance, or being whipped. White men and free black men who had interracial sex resulting in the offspring of children were also required by law to support their children. During this early history, often no strong distinctions between black and white races were made regarding the punishment for engaging in interracial sexual unions; the punishment was often the same and in early Virginia was based more upon the economic situation of the person as opposed to his or her race. Those who could afford to pay a fine, paid the fine, those who could not were whipped, often regardless of race (Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989).

Around 1662, during the time when slavery was becoming permanent for blacks, Virginia laws focused solely on interracial sexual unions and administered harsher punishments for those that engaged in such unions, as opposed to those that engaged in intraracial fornication or adultery. The concern with interracial sex was based in the belief of maintaining white racial purity, especially as more “mulatto” children were produced as a result of sexual unions between free blacks and whites and white men and enslaved black women (Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989). Mulatto children muddled the lines of racial identity (Gullickson 2006) and thus white elites developed rules that defined exactly who were of the black race. In Virginia, anyone who had an “ascertainable” amount of Negro blood was black. Later other states adopted rules of descent: in Oklahoma, anyone of African descent was black and in Arkansas a black person was anyone with “one drop” of black blood (Lopez 2006). There was very little difference in the notion or definition of mulatto and blacks, except outward physical appearance, as mulattos and blacks occupied the same social status. For example, neither was allowed to hold any type of legal office that held power or status or testify against whites in court. The 1662 Virginia codes also delineated that mulatto children would take on the status of the mother and thus if the mother was a slave then the mulatto child would also be a slave (Harris 1995; Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989).

Despite the anti-intermarriage laws and the increase in punishment for engaging in interracial sex there was a steady level of interracial sex during the colonial slave period. Much of these interracial unions were the forced sexual relations between white slave masters and overseers with black females slaves (Gullickson 2006). White men

faced few punishments if any for the rape of black women, during slavery (and later during legal segregation), as blacks and mulattos could not testify against whites in court and enslaved black women had no rights, thus rape could not happen to them. There were also some voluntary sexual unions between white men and black women. These unions were often frowned upon in society, yet were rarely prosecuted as well, since other whites would have to complain of the liaisons and testify in court against the white men (Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989). This rarely occurred, because white men were given far more freedom in their sexual liaisons with black women, whether voluntary or involuntary (Gullickson 2006).

The concern with interracial mixing was aimed predominantly at the unions of black men and white women as opposed to white men and black women. Even northern cities that did not (or no longer had) have slavery were concerned with the “miscegenation” of white women and black men. During the mid 1800’s whites in Indiana and Illinois were concerned with “restricting” free black’s settlement into their lands, petitioning for free black children to be separated in the educational system, and “rescinding” black suffrage, for fear that these rights would lead to black sexual miscegenation with whites, especially fearing that black men would try to marry the daughters of white men (Takaki 1979). White women who engaged in voluntary sex with free black men were punished far more harshly than white men who engaged in voluntary unions with black women. White women who bore mulatto children were punished the harshest; the white mother and her mulatto child could be banished to another town or the mulatto could be forced to work as a servant until the age of 30

(Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989). Mulatto children born of black mothers did not face this same fate, as it did not affect the racial order, because these children were thought of as black, whereas white women bearing mulatto or “black” children were thought of as disrupting white racial purity. In terms of rape, harsher penalties were placed on black men who raped white women than white men who raped white women. As early as the late 1600s, Virginia black men accused of raping white women were punished by death, and by 1823 black men even accused of attempted rape of white women could be put to death. By the time of 1825 a Virginia statute passed allowing free black men who had consensual sex with white women to be convicted of rape and condemned to death, save for the white woman publicly admitting to the consensual sexual union (Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989). According to Higginbotham and Kopytoff (1989), the difference in the treatment of black male rape was not just rooted in the notion of racial purity, but was rooted firmly in the belief of maintaining white male power through the “domination” and “control” of black men and white women.

Critical Analysis of Current Interracial Dating and Marriage Theories

During the period of anti-intermarriage legislation and after the demise of such laws, several studies and theories have been use in analyzing black women’s trends in interracial dating and marriage with white men and interracial dating in general. Many of the studies conducted on interracial dating and marriage between blacks and whites have lacked in a conceptual framework in terms theoretically explicating why the trends exist. Other studies have adapted race theories that are inadequate in explaining the realities of black – white interracial dating and marriage, because the analysis is not grounded in the

negative construction of black female bodies, central to a white constructed, framing of society that is racialized, gendered, and classed. Caste theory, spearheaded by Merton (1941) and Davis (1941), an often used, but outdated theory, has been particularly influential in social science literature, in explaining interracial dating and marriage dynamics in society. Due to the indelible use of this theory over time, considerable time will be spent discussing how this theory, and exchange theory, has been used to explain interracial dynamics, the inconsistent evidence for caste and exchange theories, and the theoretical limitations of this theory for explaining black-white phenomenon.

Caste and Exchange Theory: Merton, Davis, Elder, Blau, Homans. Kingsley Davis (1941) and Robert Merton (1941) conducted some of the beginning research on interracial dating and marriage between blacks and whites, by applying caste theory. At the time of Davis's and Merton's research in the 1940s, interracial marriage between whites and blacks (as well as other racial groups) was banned in many states. In the states where interracial marriage was not prohibited, few marriages between blacks and whites occurred. According to Davis (1941), when interracial marriages did occur between blacks and whites, it was most often hypogamous, in which a man of the lower racial caste of black marries a white woman from a higher racial caste, yet of a lower class status within her caste. A black man who has garnered some class status is able to "bargain" for a woman of the white caste, a socially considered higher caste than his. The white woman exchanges her caste status for class status, benefiting from marrying a black man of a higher class, than marrying a white man of the same lower class as her own (Davis 1941).

In regard to black women and white men, Davis (1941) finds that a hypergamous marriage, in which a man of the higher racial caste of white marries a woman of the lower racial caste of black, rarely occurs. He states that a white man of the lower class marrying a black woman of low caste, yet a higher class, does not have the same return as it does for a black man of low caste, but higher class, marrying a white woman. In our patriarchal society, typically, the woman marries a man for economical reasons, rather than the man marrying a woman for these reasons. In addition, if the white man was interested in a sexual relationship with a black woman, especially during the time of legal segregation, he did not have to marry her because “caste inequality” allowed him to take “sexual advantage” of her with no legal reprimand. Additionally, because of a black woman’s racial caste, she would never be able to acquire the caste of her white husband and in fact, her white husband would acquire her “lower caste,” which violates the “patrilineal principle.” Whereas if a white woman takes on the caste of her black husband it fits within the accepted principles of a patrilineal society (Davis 1941).

Social exchange theory posits similar theoretical ideas as caste theory. According to Homans’s (1961:62), the basic concept of social exchange is that social exchange “is to give the other man behavior that is more valuable to him than it is costly to you and to get from him behavior that is more valuable to you than it is costly to him.” Homans’s and Peter Blaus’s theoretical conceptions of social exchange have been applied to interracial dating and marriage. Interracial marriage as social exchange is based on the idea that whites will engage in a marriage with a person of color only if the person of color has a value, such as money, attractiveness, and status that can

compensate them for exchanging their “higher” status for the “lower” status of the person of color (Yancey and Yancey 1998).

According to Glen Elder’s (1969) analysis of exchange theory, women of lower social status, exchange attractiveness in order to marry men of a higher social status. Thus, women of lower class status can use their attractiveness to “compensate” for their lower social status and exchange their attractiveness for marriage to a man of higher class. Elder (1969) states that men in America rank attractiveness as one of the top characteristics that they would like to have in a partner. The upper class of society usually defines, controls, and embodies the standards of beauty in society, thus for men seeking to move into the upper class, marrying or dating a woman considered attractive by this class will aid in his ability to be accepted by this higher social group. Elder (1969) also finds a distinction in attractiveness as it relates to skin color, in which the majority of regions across the world consider lighter or fair skinned women as more attractive than women of darker skin tones, allowing lighter skinned women more opportunity for social mobility through marriage. This concept falls in line with America’s European standard of beauty, in which white women of thin build and blonde hair are viewed as the most beautiful and the most feminine (Collins 2005).

Inconsistent Support for Caste and Exchange Theories. There have been a series of more contemporary studies that have tested the theoretical interpretations of caste and exchange theories. Several studies have found evidence in support of caste and exchange theories, while several, often more recent studies, have found evidence that debunks caste and exchange theories relevancy in explaining interracial dating and

marriage trends. Regarding studies that have found supportive evidence for caste and exchange theories, an example is Kalmijn's (1993) study of marriage licenses data of black-white couples between the years of 1968 and 1986. Kalmijn finds in black male-white female marriages, white women have a higher likelihood to marry up, (marry men with more education), when marrying black men, which is called status hypergamy. When marrying white men, white women marry up due to the difference in the educational attainment rate between white women and white men, with white men being much more likely to be educated. However, Kalmijn finds that when white women marry up when marrying black men, it is not based on educational disparities between black men and white women, but based more on white women marrying up as a form of "socioeconomic status gain." In terms of black women-white men marriages, Kalmijn finds support for status hypogamous marriages, in which white men are more likely to marry up when marrying black women; thus black women marry down in interracial marriages. Kalmijn (1993: 138) states that the "untraditional status dominance of black women in mixed couples...confirms the argument that racial caste prestige and social status function as substitutes in the selection process." He notes that black women are likely to marry down when marrying within their own race; however, even in black women's interracial marriages with white men, the "traditional male status dominance" is reversed.

A recent study of online interracial dating finds partial evidence for exchange theory. The study examines the personal advertisements that blacks posted on a major internet dating website. Based on the analysis of the profiles, the researchers find that

black participants that define themselves as more attractive were more willing to date interracial, than Blacks that define themselves as less attractive. This finding provides support for exchange theory; suggesting that blacks may exchange their good looks for the status of higher racial groups and high status racial groups may exchange their status for the good looks of certain blacks (Wilson, McIntosh, and Insana 2007). However, the study also finds data that conflict with exchange theory, finding that blacks who smoke and do not exercise were more willing to date whites. This finding did not seem to support exchange theory, because smoking is not a good attribute for exchange. However, the black smokers did not describe themselves as overweight or unattractive and smoking is portrayed as “sexy” or “cool” in the media. Thus, smoking may not be a strong characteristic that could cause a potential partner to appear unattractive (Wilson et.al 2007) and thus it may not diminish their exchange value.

While some studies have found evidence to support caste and exchange theories, other studies find no evidence to support caste and exchange theories theoretical frame that lower caste blacks marry higher caste whites through the process of socially exchanging a material good such as education, income, or beauty in exchange for whites marrying "down." A study by Yancey and Yancey (1998) on personal advertisements of people seeking interracial and intraracial “pre-marriage relationships,” finds that caste and exchange theories are irrelevant. In the study, the researchers compared the advertisements of whites and blacks who were willing to interracial date, testing whether or not whites seeking interracial dates sought “relational assets, physical attractiveness, and financial security” and if blacks seeking interracial dates offered

“relational assets, physical attractiveness, and financial security” more than whites and blacks seeking intraracial dates, as exchange theories might predict. Yancey and Yancey's study finds that whites and blacks who interracially date seek similar characteristics in their partner, including similar desires for attractiveness. Based on these findings, they conclude that the similarities in partner selection for blacks and whites suggest that caste and exchange theories are outdated in explaining interracial marriage, particularly for those individuals seeking interracial dating and marriage. They posit that people seeking interracial dating and marriage come together for the same reasons as intraracial couples and that they marry based on mutual love, respect, and ideals (Yancey and Yancey 1998).

Michael Rosenfeld's (2005) also debunked the relevancy of caste and exchange theories use for examining interracial dating and marriage relationships trends. This study finds that past studies have supported status-caste exchange theories, because they overemphasized the differences in social status among interracial couples and focused primarily on young interracial couples, instead of settled couples. Rosenfeld finds that young interracial couples of black men and white women may appear to be in caste-exchange relationships, because the men are typically older and have finished their education first, whereas the women, who are typically younger, are still in school. Thus, he finds that it appears that white women are less educated; however, when they finish school, their educational attainment will be the same as their black husbands. Rosenfeld purports that what was perceived as evidence for caste-exchange relationships, was in fact, a gender difference. Rosenfeld (2005), in debunking caste and exchange theory,

concludes that “interracial unions are formed on a basis of solidarity and affection and personal choice, not a basis” of status-caste exchanges. Studies by Porterfield (1978) and Kouri and Lasswell (1993) also provide evidence against caste and exchange theories. In these studies, the authors find that most of the black-white couples tended to have similar socioeconomic backgrounds as opposed to hypergamous or hypogamous marriages and that the couples were more likely to marry based on love and compatibility as opposed to caste-exchange purposes.

Theoretical Problems with Caste Theory—Myrdal and Cox. Although, most recent studies have debunked caste and exchange theories relevancy as theoretical approaches to analyzing trends of exclusion or inclusion in interracial dating and marriage, it has generally been debunked without providing a critical alternative approach. This may lead one to believe that the intersecting affects of racism, sexism, and classism have little or a severely reduced impact on the decisions individuals, particularly whites, make in regard to the type of relationship partners they choose. That individuals solely make decisions about marriage partners, whether interracial or intraracial, based on compatibility, mutual goals, respect, and love. However, the overwhelming exclusion of black women as dating partners and the low intermarriage rates of black women, particularly in comparison to other racial groups of color, shows indeed that racial, gender, and class politics surrounding black women affect white men as well as men of color’s relationship decisions where black women are concerned. Important to note, some studies have taken a more critical approach and have used other alternatives to analyzing interracial trends, particularly the Feliciano (et al. 2008) study,

discussed earlier, used “gendered racial formation theory;” an extension of Omi and Winant’s racial formation theory.

Furthermore, caste theory in particular has been so easily debunked, because the theory has theoretical limitations when applied to black-white racial dynamics, as it obscures racial dynamics with caste dynamics –the basis of caste theory. In early social scientists application of caste theory to black and white dynamics, blacks were treated as a naturally lower racial caste and whites a naturally superior caste, and from a caste theory perspective, the negative treatment of blacks by whites, including discrimination in education, housing, income, and the legal ban and disdain against black-white interracial marriage were rooted in the belief of black’s natural inferiority as a lower racial caste (Myrdal 1944). Caste theory became problematic as a theory of racial relations as the belief of blacks as a naturally inferior group began to dissipate in many important disciplines, such as psychology, education, anthropology, and other social sciences. These disciplines began to move towards environmentalism as a way to explain racial group differences, rather than explaining group differences as natural racial inferiority or superiority (Myrdal 1944). Education, based on the new trends of these disciplines, eliminated the ideological support for racial caste theory by opposing the believed innate inferiority of blacks (Myrdal 1944).

With the dismantling of the ideological stance of blacks as a naturally inferior caste, the dismantling of anti-intermarriage laws in the 1960s and the passing of civil rights legislation, negative and apprehensive views and circumstances of blacks continue. Blacks continue to have adverse experiences in society compared to whites,

with blacks experiencing poor and segregated secondary education, limited home ownership, job security and upward mobility, and a much lower median net worth, as black families average only \$5,446 to white families \$87,050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Gottschalck 2008). Black women continue to be excluded by white men (and other men of color) as dating and marriage partner's in comparison to other forms interracial couples with white men. What explains these continuing circumstances if the support for treating black people as a naturally inferior racial caste has been disproven? Herein is the problem with caste theory, which is that caste theory yields limited explanations of racial dynamics and is easily debunked, because the notion of caste concerns Brahmanic Indian societies, which are distinctly differently from black-white racial dynamics. Caste groups, in Indian societies are known by their social status in society. For example, being of a certain caste may suggest "scrupulous cleanliness" while another caste may suggest "filth and degradation" (Cox 194: 115). Racial groups, however, are known by how they look physically, and *then* subsequent notions of social status are applied to them based on how they look racially. Brahmanic Indian societies are organized around a belief in natural superior and inferior groups, a relationship that is socially acceptable within society and that is more likely to imply a "peaceful status ordering of the society," whereas, black and white dynamics concern "subordination and superordination, a relationship implying suspended conflict" (Cox 1948:123).

Hence, caste theory is limited in explaining the experiences of blacks in this society today and is thus limited in explaining why black women are continually excluded as dating and marriage options for white men as well as men of color. A

critical theoretical approach that undergirds the historical, structural, and intersecting circumstances of race, gender, and class in this country and its affect on black women is integral to undertaking to this research phenomenon. Hence, I must look elsewhere for a full explanation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: INTERSECTING OPPRESSIONS OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS

I conceptually frame this study encompassing a critical race and gender perspective that integrally analyzes the intersecting and overlapping oppressions of racism, sexism, and at times classism (as well as other forms of oppression). The undertaking of critical theory is central to this study as I attempt to show the importance of analyzing, critically, how race, gender, and at times class act as intersecting oppressions that affect the politics surrounding black women and black women-white men interracial relationships.

Systemic Racism

To understand the long standing structural and historical phenomenon of racial oppression in the United States, Feagin (2006) posits a critical race theory of systemic racism. According to Feagin (2006) blacks experience systemic racism, an oppressive system of white racism and discrimination, embedded in white practices and social institutions that are “integral” to the oppression of people of color. Systemic racism is rooted in European exploitation, including the genocidal treatment of Native Americans and the domination and labor exploitation of blacks.

Initially, the new colonies of the Americas consisted of European indentured servants, African slaves brought as early as 1619, African indentured servants, and free blacks. Unlike enslaved Africans, European indentured servants, after working for a period of years, were able to have their freedom and farm their own lands (Feagin 2000), whereas African slavery was permanent. Eventually, less European indentured servants were available in the new colonies as their time of servitude ended and there was a greater reliance on African slave labor and a marked and consistent increase in the amount of African slaves brought to the new colonies (Harris 1995). The late 1670s marked the occurrence of the Bacon's Rebellion, which increased fears among the landowning whites that poor European indentured servants and Africans would unite to overthrow the white elite. With the unreliability of indentured servants and the fear of joint revolts among poor Europeans and enslaved Africans, African slavery became relied upon more, as the skin color of Africans and the "cultural differences" made them easier to identify for "purposes of enslavement and control" (Feagin 2000: 40). Early on whites referred to themselves as English men or Christian, however, with the ever burgeoning "entrenchment" of chattel slavery racialized terms of white and black began to define who was enslaveable and who was not and a "white" racial identity was constructed (Harris 1995). Being black became inexorably interchangeable with slavery and white with freedom. The construction of white identity, based on an ideology of white superiority (Feagin 2000), served to sever any probable alliances that poor whites and enslaved Africans could develop, as poor whites were able to garner the privileges

and freedoms of whiteness and began to identify more with the landowning white elite, than with their class interest.

As European settlers began to define themselves as white to distinguish themselves as distinctively different from blacks and later other racial/ethnic groups; making blacks the antithesis to whites became the focal point. Europeans early comparisons and rankings of whites, blacks, and other racial groups are the makings of what Feagin (2006) coins the white-to-black racial hierarchy or continuum. Early writings by Thomas Jefferson show how whites placed themselves at the top of the hierarchy as the most superior racial group and blacks at the bottom, as the most innately inferior group. Native Americans were placed above blacks, as categorically inferior to whites, but still better than blacks (as other racial groups entered American society, whites placed them along hierarchy as well). In the quote below Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia* ([1785] 1991), provides his hierarchical arrangement of the races:

Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior....We will consider them here, on the same stage with the whites, and where the facts are not apocryphal on which a judgment is to be formed. It will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move. Many millions of them have been brought to, and born in America. Most of them indeed have been confined to tillage, to their own homes, and their own society: yet many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters; many have been brought up to the handicraft arts, and from that circumstance have always been associated with the whites. Some have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree, and have had before their eyes samples of the best works from abroad. The Indians, with no advantages of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not

destitute of design and merit. They will crayon out an animal, a plant, or a country, so as to prove the existence of a germ in their minds which only wants cultivation. They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture... To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. Advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. (Pp. 146-150).

Here, Jefferson's views on blacks as inferior to whites and Natives Americans, with whites depicted as the most superior, grounds an early ideological framework of systemically racist's ideals and corresponding racist treatment against blacks (and other people of color).

Based on a society founded upon systemic racism, there has been a generation to generation "social reproduction and transmission" of privileges, such as wealth, education, networks, and power for whites whereas people of color, particularly blacks, have inherited very little social resources, if any. According to Feagin (2006) the "economic domination," of whites, has provided "unjust enrichment" to whites and "unjust impoverishment" to blacks; a "social reproduction" and "social transmission" of "hierarchy and inequality." Through this process, blacks have inherited very little socioeconomic resources, due to white-on-black oppression. Whites, however, have inherited vast socioeconomic resources, including social networks and access to cultural capital, such as education. Brooks (2004: 44), states that after slavery, the near century of Jim Crow, "forced former slaves and their descendants" who had virtually no

resources “into the worst jobs, worst housing, and worst educational systems.” Thus, an additional hundred years of legal segregation, severely hampered blacks, who had no resources, from amassing substantial resources of income, education, and home ownership that are essential to surviving and thriving within this society. Roy Brooks (2004:36) discusses the effects candidly, when he states “thirty years after the cheating stopped with the passage of civil rights legislation, the racialized distribution of the...power, wealth, and privilege—continues to limit opportunities for black Americans.” The continuance of income and wealth disparity results from generations of whites transmitting racialized power, wealth, and income, garnered unjustly, to their next generation, perpetuating a cycle of privilege for whites and inequality for blacks.

Systemic racism continues fervently today, because it is “well-institutionalized” and has been maintained through the “collective actions” of whites. This system of oppression has changed over time. For example, the end of legal segregation in the 1960s, however, the changes have been surface level and have not penetrated the core of a foundation build on racial discrimination, and thus many of the same racist’s institutions are left in place. Additionally, those who typically make the changes to the system are the white elite who seek, whether conscious or unconscious, to maintain their privileges, benefits, and authority, changing the scope of society, such as signing civil rights legislations, when it fits their interests (Feagin 2006).

Intersection Theory: Critical Feminist Perspective

While critical race theory is an important framework for understanding the structural foundation of race in society, also of importance is the affect of structural

intersecting oppressions of race with gender and class (as well as other forms of oppression) on black women. The research and theoretical development of the overlapping oppressions of race, gender, and class has been greatly advanced by the work of many black feminists' scholars. Many of these scholars have analyzed the distinct experiences of black women in America, which have often been ignored or misrepresented as some white feminists and other theorists have lumped the experiences of black women in with those of black men, assuming incorrectly that black women's experiences are no different from those of black men (King 1988). Other white feminist's scholars have used additive or nuanced models to explain the experiences of black woman; these theories represent black woman as first women, with added, but secondary, grievances of being black and/or of the lower class. These models do not account for how race, gender, class, (and sexuality) intersect in women's lives (Chanter 2006). Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) and hooks (1981) note that when some feminists scholars and other theorists use additive theory to refer to or address "women" in their writings, women means "white women" and "black" is synonymous with black men, black women thus become nonexistent in the analysis.

Black feminist scholar Angela Harris (1990) is critical of influential feminist theorist Catherine MacKinnon and others who have projected woman as white woman and have obscured the intersecting oppressions of race and class with gender. According to Harris (1990: 245) when MacKinnon, in her work *Feminism Unmodified*, describes "black women as being 'different' white women quietly become the norm" by which black women are compared to. White women, thus represent an essential woman,

whereas all other women are some variation of this norm. For example, in terms of beauty, according to MacKinnon, black women, just like white women, have difficulty meeting societal standards of beauty, “only more so.” This ignores the fact that embedded within the standard of beauty is whiteness and black women never become white. In the example of rape, Harris (1990) finds that MacKinnon describes black women as sexual assault victims, same as white women, “only more so.” However, this ignores the historical reality of rape; the fact that black women could not be raped, by either black men or white men during slavery and often legal segregation, because historically and by law rape did not happen to black women (Harris 1990).

Black women’s oppression is thus different from the experiences of black men and white women and these differences must be articulated in order to understand the “nature of black womanhood” (King 1988). Black women experience a “triple jeopardy” of racism, classism, and sexism, oppressions that are rooted in slavery. The intersection of race, gender, and class in black women’s lives is rather complex, as at times race and class may be more salient factors and at other times gender and class, or gender and race, may be more salient (King 1988). Sexual orientation is another overlapping dimension that affects black women’s life experiences; however, this study focuses primarily on heterosexuality. Of theoretical importance, as we will see with the responses of the white male participants in this study, while the intersection of race and gender is usually always present in the white male respondents’ discourse, class is not always as salient. Often the white male respondents in the study view black women as a monolithic group, at times this monolithic group is classed, typically “lower-class,” such as some

respondents viewing most black women as welfare queens. When classed discourse is expressed it is often implied, as opposed to explicit.

Whites Constructing Social Reality and Deep Frames

Central to understanding systemic intersecting oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism is the immense power that whites, particularly white male elites, have had in constructing the reality that we know in the world. Undergirding the social construction of reality is explicating that what we know about the world we live in is not just natural or objectively out there in the world “waiting to be discovered” (Roy 2001); what we know is constructed by those who have the power to do so. Although society is socially constructed this does not obscure the fact that real institutions, real practices, and real life oppressions experienced by black women and other groups exist.

Integral to understanding how reality has been socially constructed in western societies is the role of white elites, who have the power to define intricacies of society in ways that best benefit them and aid in the maintenance of their power. This dominant group is able to generally construct the culture of society, what is considered normal or ideal, and structure dominant institutions such as the legal institutions, the family, and education systems. With the ability to construct and control the major functions and understandings of the operation of society, white elites also control who has access to resources and who benefits most from social institutions, which plays out in a raced, gendered, classed, and sexually oriented manner. As aforementioned white elites constructed racial classifications of whiteness and blackness (and other groups of color) as well as a classification system that ranked each racial group, placing whites as the

pentacle of superiority and blacks as utter inferiority, with other racial groups, such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans in between those two “polarities.” These categories and rankings were constructed to enforce the permanency and legitimacy of slavery, providing economic and psychological benefits for whites and naturalizing whites social positioning at the top of the economic, education, and cultural spheres in the Jim Crow era as well as in the current post Jim Crow era. As with racial categories, white elites construct intersecting class and gender hierarchies (as well as other categories such as heterosexuality) affording the highest privileges to those in the dominant group of each socially constructed hierarchical category, i.e. white, male, elite, heterosexuals (Roy 2001).

To maintain these privileges whites constructed themselves with positive characteristics and attributes, such as “industrious,” “intelligent,” “moral,” “knowledgeable,” possessing an “enabling culture,” “responsible,” “law-abiding,” and “virtuous” (Crenshaw 1995: 113). These positive descriptors make the resources and benefits of society that whites have appear as if they are rooted in white’s savvy industriousness and “superior” nature as opposed to being accrued through power and domination. In this construction white men, particularly elite white men, are constructed as the apex of ideal manhood, embodying strength, dominance, and the ability to protect. White women are constructed as the height of womanhood, in terms of beauty, body and desirability. In this same vein, whites construct blacks as the opposite of whiteness with a bevy of negative characterizations and attributes, such as “lazy,” “unintelligent,” “immoral,” “ignorant,” possessing of a “disabling culture” “criminal,” “shiftless,” and

“lascivious” among others (Crenshaw 1995). Critical to this research is specifically the ways in which dominant and influential whites have constructed black female bodies in raced, gendered, and classed terms. Historically, the construction of black female bodies has been that of sexual licentiousness, natural immorality, disease, animalism, prostitution, and masculinity; the opposite of hegemonic, white, femininity (Collins 2005; Hammonds 1997; Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003; St. Jean and Feagin 1998). Black women were and today still are considered everything that a white woman is not in terms of beauty, sexual morality, femininity, and womanhood. This global overarching construction of black female bodies has persisted throughout society through pervasive raced, sexed, and at times classed dominant narrative and visual discourses, including controlling images or myths, such as the jezebel, sapphire, matriarch, mammy, and modern mammy, which are often connected to emotions. The construction of black female bodies and the classed and gendered construction of whites (as well as other racial groups) have come to represent hegemonic edifices.

Due to elite whites power to construct and control reality in such a way that it best benefits and maintains white domination and power and the general subordination of other groups, whites have effectively framed the ways in which everyday whites and people in general come to know, see, and understand society in raced, gendered, and classed ways. Frames are “deep seated mental structures about how the world works” and are part of our cognitive conscious. The ways in which we reason and what we deem as “common sense” are all a part of the frame (or frames) central to our makeup (Lakoff 2004). *Deep frames* represent our world view and are considered the “conceptual

infrastructure of the mind;” (Lakoff 2006a:12) they are so deeply enmeshed that they are representative of our very identity and thus we often operate from our deep frames in an “unconscious and automatic” manner (Lakoff 2006b: 25). Frames are not just cognitive in terms of thinking and reasoning, but also include emotions, sounds, smells (Feagin 2009) and written, spoken, and visual discourses. When we think, communicate, smell, see, hear, and engage in discourse we activate our deep frames. The concept of the white racial frame, which comprises “racial ideas, terms, images, emotions, and inclinations to discriminate,” has been influential in detailing white’s worldview and interpretations of society, themselves, and people of color, from a racialized perspective or framing (Feagin 2009: 3). In this study, I analyze the *deep frame*, the deep world view, of whites that is simultaneously racialized, gendered, and at times classed and integrally undergirds what whites know, perceive, and interpret about society and groups of individuals occupying placement in each overlapping socially constructed hierarchical category. The ways in which whites have constructed black female bodies, meaning the knowledge and meaning systems about black women, (which I discuss in more detail in Chapter III), is a critical component in this deep frame, which is the lens through which many white men, and some men of color, come to perceive, interpret, understand, emote, and engage in actions where black women are concerned.

Surface frames, which are smaller scale frames connected to certain words, phrases, ways of communicating (Lakoff 2006a; 2006b), smells, and sights, are integral to deep frames, because they reinforce and activate deep frames. Surface level frames are inconsequential if a deep frame for the surface level frames to “hang on” to (Lakoff

2006a) is not present. Thus, due to the longstanding, white constructed, racialized, gendered, and at times classed deep frame of society that comprises a hegemonic construction of black female bodies, a phrase such as “welfare queens,” or simply “welfare” conjures up notions of a poor “urban” black women usurping the system and living off tax payer dollars. However, the term “welfare queens” and the term “mother’s pension,” which is a form of welfare that predominantly benefitted older widowed white women (Abramovitz 1996), does not conjure up notions of undeserving white women manipulating the system. Welfare, in its inception in the 1930s was exclusive and benefitted white’s only (Katznelson 2005) yet since the 1960s, when blacks had more of an opportunity to accrue benefits from welfare and similarly throughout the 1980s and 90’s, whites have restructured welfare so that “undeserving,” “conniving,” and “lazy,” “urban” black women are directly connected to and the cause of the “burdensome” problem of welfare. Thus, the surface frame associated with the phrase “welfare queens” has so much resonance, because it directly activates and reinforces the deep frame, by which the knowledge of black female bodies, among other things, is that of undeserving welfare usurpers.

Essential to the white constructed deep frame are a variety of white created narrative stories. The racialized, gendered, and classed narrative stories that whites tell are used to express principles, beliefs (Lakoff 2006b), values and ideas consistent with the deep frame and to reaffirm a positive white identity. The stories include victims, villains, and heroes (Lakoff 2006b) and are directly connected to strong emotions, such as anger, disdain, fear, anxiety, shame and guilt (Feagin 2009). A hegemonic narrative,

central to the deep frame in regard to black women (or blacks in general) is the lazy black woman, who lacks fortitude, “get-up-and-go,” is anemic to hard work, has several children, and subsists on welfare. She is juxtaposed with hardworking whites who work hard for what they have, have never received any handouts or privileges, and who have “bootstrapped” their way to their position in life. American society and tax-paying citizens are the victims, the “lazy black woman” represents the villain, and the “bootstrapping” whites are the heroes.

Individuals may not develop every component of the white constructed racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame, for some whites the deep frame can be stronger and deeper and may comprise of a variety of racialized, gendered, and class components, whereas for other whites (as well as people of color) the deep frame is present but may not consist of every deep component. Blacks, due to their marginalized status and their long history of dealing with oppression, are much more aware of the white constructed deep frame and are more successful in engaging in resistance against it, yet blacks and other people of color still often fall prey to the disciplinary power of the frame. Moreover, the deep frame is historically affected. During the slavery and Jim Crow eras, two central components of the deep frame regarding black women and blacks in general were those of innate animalism and natural biological inferiority, akin to the notions of Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

However, the civil rights movement and the subsequent post Jim Crow era consisted of a move away from explicit notions of blacks as innate beings of inferiority – as the explanation for their “position” in society—to a general shift towards blacks as

culturally inferior. Many of the same old deep frame arguments are made about blacks, in terms of their “subordinate” status in society. Yet, these arguments are more explicitly rooted in notions of black “cultural depravity,” which includes a belief in blacks lacking a hard work ethic, self-discipline, respect for learning, and conservative family values” (Lakoff 2006a; Crenshaw 1995). This more contemporary segment of the deep frame is what I refer to as the modern oppression-blind segment, is “blind” to raced, gendered, and at times classed oppression, and views society as a generally equal, level playing field meritocracy, in which race, gender, and class have no (or minimal) effects on life circumstances. Important to note, the denigration of black culture has been consistent in the deep frame of whites for centuries and many whites, as far back as the 1600’s in the United States and in Europe, have used both the argument of black cultural and biological inferiority for a very long time now. However, since the post Jim Crow era and the societal public shift towards “political correctness” and “colorblindness,” whites have focused mainly on espousing an oppression-blind argument that denigrates black culture as opposed to expressing a belief in black biological inferiority.

This modern oppression-blind argument assumes that laws are generally fair and just and progress in society is based on merit, hard work, discipline, and the adoption of “white” normed ideals and values. Blacks are thus unsuccessful, black women are thus undesirable, because they lack or abhor certain cultural traits. White men operating from this more modern segment of the racialized, gendered, and at times classed deep frame may, for example, state that they would date a black woman, but, that the majority of black women have certain “black” cultural values that they view as unattractive and/or

inferior. Similar statements as such were found prevalent in my research. The strong notions of blacks as innately inferior and animalistic are still consistent, deeply enmeshed components of the deep frame; however, the modern notion of oppression-blindness is present as well and offers a more tacit way of communicating similar racialized, gendered, and classed ideas. Whites may employ the older segments of the deep frame of natural inferiority and/or the more modern cultural deprivation segment.

People are “multiconceptuals” and do not just operate from one frame, but often from several frames (Feagin 2009; Lakoff 2006a). The liberty and justice frame (Feagin 2009) and the resistance frames of people of color are other central frames to individuals in society. The liberty and justice frame, which many whites have historically and presently given lip service to, is a white constructed frame that is seemingly in opposition to the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame. This frame has focused on abstract forms of rights and justice and is rooted historically in white’s offense against the British (Feagin 2009). In society today the liberty and justice frame is mostly “rhetorical” and “hypothetical” and as in the past has generally been reserved for protecting the rights, and liberties, and providing justice for whites. Although individuals are often multiconceptuals, deeper more resonating, particularly privileging frames can trump or influence other frames, as the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame of whites often influences and trumps their liberty and justice frame. Some whites, although modest, have truly adhered to the tenants of a liberty and justice frame and have attempted to bring about justice for subordinated groups in society, most noticeably

whites involvement in the abolition movement during slavery and the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Feagin 2009).

Important also are the ways in which the racialized, classed, and gendered deep frame is learned. Because whites, particularly elite white males, have the power to construct, control, and influence knowledge, meaning, and reality in society, the deep frame, or world view of whites is directly entrenched within almost all aspects of American culture, and even many aspects of global culture. Thus the deep frame or world view of whites comes to represent how much of society is framed. Through constant repetition of verbal, written, and visual discourses of the deep frame, it becomes embedded in our brains (Lakoff 2006a) and is thus effortlessly learned. Through parents, grandparents, other family members, the media, television shows, news, movies, the school system at every level of education, and the internet, a burgeoning site of racist, sexist, and classist activity, the deep frame is consistently learned and expressed. Through family, friends, and media, white men (and whites in general) learn continually, whether implicitly or explicitly, about black women. However, what they learn is through the lens of the deep frame, and consequentially many white men have strong racialized, gendered, and at times classed views of black women, yet often have had limited experiences with them. Central to this point is that white men often may not consider themselves racist, sexist, or classist in any way regarding black women, because the racialized, gendered, and classed meaning systems of the deep frame are so normalized that they represent commonsense knowledge about black women. This deep frame is very difficult to penetrate, because it is so deeply embedded. Thus the frame is

not dismantled by a white male simply having a positive experience with a black woman or viewing positive images of black women in the media. Providing people with facts that refute the frame does not help in breaking down the existing racialized, gendered, and classed elements of the deep frame, because facts can be “assimilated into the brain only if there is a frame to make sense out of them” (Lakoff 2006a). Thus, positive facts and images about black women often do not have a deep frame “to make sense out of” in white men’s minds, because of the resonance of the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame that constructs black female bodies negatively and in opposition to hegemonic femininity.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

Chapter II provides a detailed overview of the methods, rationalizations, and research sample for this study. I focus primarily in this chapter on detailing the methodological approaches of constructivist grounded theory and critical frame analysis. A constructivist grounded theory focuses on interpretation and developing theory from data while critical frame analysis examines various components of frames, including cognition, emotional reactions, practices and actions, and most significantly narrative and visual discourses, which are images and “language as a social practice determined by social structures” (Fairclough 1989). I end this chapter, with a detailed description of the demographics of the participants, including age, region, and experiences with black women and the methodological limitations of the qualitative study.

Chapter III provides an analysis of the ways in which white men have constructed black female bodies in terms of the kinds of knowledge and meaning white

elites have constructed to define black female bodies. This chapter acts as a historical and contemporary frame analysis, where I detail how the racialized, gendered, and at times classed knowledge of black female bodies, has come to be, and how this knowledge is representative of white men's deep frame or common sense world view. I engage a sort of genealogy, examining how the construction of black female bodies is historically rooted in early European travelers and scientists understanding, perception, assessment, and written, verbal, and visual discourse of tribal African women, particularly the "Hottentot" and the "Bushmen" (Guy-Sheftall 2002). I also show how this historical construction is the foundation of the more contemporary construction of black female bodies. In my analysis, I focus specifically on the construction of black women's "femininity," "womanhood," "reproduction," "beauty," and "sexuality." These constructed knowledge systems regarding black female bodies are elements of the deep frame.

In Chapter IV, I analyze the dominant discourse of whiteness as normality that white male respondents in this study express. The discourse expressed by the white male respondents often placed facial or body features, based on a white norm, as the most desirable attributes. The respondents employ what I refer to as a discourse of comparisons, in which when sharing their thoughts on black women in terms of attraction or as possible partners, black women were often compared dyadically to the white standard in terms of their ability or inability to meet this standard.

In Chapter V, I look at how race, gender, culture, and class. I analyze what one white male respondent coins as "two classes of black women," a class of black women

who embrace “white culture” and are viewed as higher class and more desirable by white male respondents and another class of black women immersed in “black culture” and who are designated as lower class and undesirable. In most instances, white male respondents define black women as most representative of the latter. In this chapter, I analyze how whites place “white” or “European” culture as superior and the ideal that black women should strive for.

Chapter VI analyzes a central narrative, an important component of deep frames that white men employ in regard to black women. The central narrative discussed in this chapter is the presentation of black women as essentially unwanted women. Respondents accomplish this narrative by ascribing a bevy of attributes to black women. Some respondents engage in overt gendered racism, placing black women as the embodiment of negativity, disease, unattractiveness, among other traits. Often the respondents ascribe certain attributes to black women, such as strength, and use this attribute to define black women as unwanted women. Other respondents’ express that black women are not even wanted by black men.

In the final chapter, I provide my conclusion of the research study. I re-connect important findings with theory, making important connections between frames and disciplining behavior and actions. I discuss how the research provides data that refutes colorblind and post racial societies as often expressed, particularly since Obama’s presidency. I discuss my ruminations as a black female researcher in this project, in terms how black women emotionally handle the continuing negative construction of their bodies and the affect this has on black women’s lives from a relationship

perspective with black men and other men of color. Lastly, I provide recommendations for further research as well as social advocacy for making important structural changes in the perceptions of black women.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY: GROUNDED THEORY AND CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS

This qualitative study examines white men's discourse pertaining black women using new conceptualizations of grounded theory that move beyond its positivist roots, originated by Barney G. Glasser and Anslem L. Strauss, and employ a constructivist approach. A constructivist grounded theory emphasizes an interpretive tradition to the development of theory and focuses on how and why individuals "construct meanings and actions in specific situations" (Charmaz 2006a:130). The theoretical and methodological approach of critical frame analysis is used as well, which analyzes various components of frames, including cognition, emotional reactions, practices and actions, and most significantly narrative and visual discourses, which are images and "language as a social practice determined by social structures" (Fairclough 1989: 17). Critical frame analysis and grounded theory are particularly useful methodological frames for this study as they allow me to analyze the components of deep frames including white men's discourse, emotional reactions to, perceptions of, and practices and actions towards black women, to reveal the disciplining power of deep frames, and to develop emergent data driven theoretical concepts. In the sections that follow, I provide an overview of the qualitative research design, a detailed description of grounded theory and critical discourse analysis, the data collection process including a rationale for the use of self-administered online questionnaires, the ethical considerations and research limitations, and a snapshot of the research sample and data coding process.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative analysis is concerned with applying meaning to social behavior, understanding and interpreting the thoughts and views of participants through rich, thick description, and follows an emergent rather than “pre-figured” paradigm. Qualitative researchers engage in self-reflection in the research process, “view social phenomena as holistic,” understand their personal knowledge and history and its connection to their study, and use reasoning that is “multifaceted” and “iterative” (Marshall and Rossman 2006). The importance of using qualitative analysis in this study is that many of the studies on interracial dating have chiefly used a quantitative approach. Quantitative research, unlike qualitative analysis, generally employs the collection and analysis of “numerical data,” and follows a positivist approach with a focus on deductive reasoning and the testing of hypotheses derived from existing theories (Bryman 2008). Many of the current studies on interracial dating have provided a quantitative overview through percentages and other statistical data of the trends in interracial dating regarding black women and white men, finding that overwhelmingly black women are excluded by white men as dating options. These quantitative studies have provided vast insights; however, they do not provide the rich, in-depth analysis of exactly why these trends exist. Qualitative analysis provides the methodological approach to accomplish this task through the examination and interpretation of white men’s discourse, derived from the racialized and gendered deep frame, pertaining black women and formulating relationships with black women.

Although much of the literature has been quantitative there have been some studies on black-white interracial unions that have used rich qualitative approaches. A study by Yancey (2007b) analyzed the experiences of racism for interracial couples, examining both white-non-black couples and white-black interracial couples, through the use of in-depth interviews. He found that in black-white intermarriages, whites were more likely to experience racism and “hostility,” whereas with white-non-black (Asian American and Latino) interracial couples, white spouses were more likely to learn of racism indirectly through their partners, rather than experience it. Additionally a study by Kouri and Laswell (1993) also used qualitative analysis – interviewing black-white interracial couples about the dynamics of their relationship, in terms of how they met, their families’ reaction to the marriage and their “household issues.” These qualitative studies have provided great insights, particularly Yancey’s study showing that there continues to be more objection and hostility towards black-white interracial couples. However, these studies focus on couples already married and do not provide an in-depth analysis of why black women are excluded as dating options and thus have a smaller likelihood of ever engaging in interracial marriage in the first place. Qualitative analysis provides me with the tools to accomplish this task.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Grounded Theory

Traditional grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), posits that theory should develop from the data and that theorists should focus on using inductive logic as opposed to deductive logic. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967: 6, 24), the

generation of theory must be in “relation to the data or there is great danger that theory and the empirical world will mismatch.” They posit that a “strategic method” of generating theory is through comparative analysis, which provides “empirical generalizations that help delimit a grounded theory’s boundaries of applicability” and “broaden the theory” so that it has “greater explanatory and predictive power.” Although Glaser and Strauss’s formulation of grounded theory has been very influential in the sociological discipline, theorists such as Kathy Charmaz, Adele Clarke and other social scientists provide new formulations of grounded theory that critique old assumptions of Glaser and Strauss’s theory and provide an analysis of grounded theory that pushes it further postmodernists.

Kathy Charmaz in her works attempts to move grounded theory beyond the traditional conceptions of Glaser and Strauss, which, particularly in the case of Glaser, follows a more positivist approach based on “assumptions” of an objective reality out there in the world. Charmaz (2006b: 510) employs a constructivist grounded theory as opposed to an objectivist grounded theory, that uses the tools of grounded theory, yet “does not assume that data simply await discovery in an external world,” nor does it follow the engagement of “objective reportings” of reality. Alternatively, a constructivist grounded theory’s theoretical analyses are based on an interpretation of reality. Charmaz’s formulation of grounded theory also focuses on grounded theory’s use in social justice work, an important approach for this study. According to Charmaz (2006b), through grounded theory researchers can analyze the ways in which power, inequality, and privilege are “construct[ed] and enact[ed]” and how the intersecting

affects of race, class, gender, and other forms of difference and inequality are played out at “interactional and organizational levels.”

Adele Clarke (2005), in her influential text *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn* also seeks to extend grounded theory in new postmodern ways and espouses ways in which grounded theory can continue to move forward. In approaching grounded theory from the perspective of being grounded “epistemologically and ontologically in symbolic interactionists theory” (P. 3) (following Strauss’s formulation of grounded theory), Clarke notes that in many ways grounded theory is already around the postmodern turn, yet it still has some kinks that makes grounded theory “recalcitrant against the postmodern turn.” One of the ways in which grounded theory’s “already around the postmodern turn,” is rooted in its symbolic interactionist roots which follows a materialist social constructionism, allowing for an interpretation of not just ideologies and symbols but also a material world. Other positives that make it already around the postmodern turn according to Clarke are grounded theory’s engagement of deconstructive analysis rooted in its use of open coding, its ability to analyze differences, make differences visible and to “make silences speak,” its “Meadian notion” of partial and/or situated perspectives, its ability to represent instabilities based on its orientation towards action and negotiations (particularly in Anslem Strauss’s work), and its ecological and social worlds/arena.

Despite the positives of grounded theory that make it already around the postmodern turn, it also has several kinks according to Clarke (2005) that makes it “recalcitrant against the postmodern turn.” These include grounded theory’s insufficient

reflexivity, its oversimplifications and focus on commonalities as opposed to relaying the contradictions of social phenomena, its reluctance to allow for multiple social processes, and as aforementioned in Charmaz's work, grounded theory's objectivist focus, rooted in the positivist tradition of Glaser and other grounded theorist. Clarke (2005) develops strategies to move past grounded theory's recalcitrance and to push it further. She extends grounded theory to what she refers to as situational analysis, which is a "situation-centered approach" that makes the actual situation the unit of analysis and the focus of study on understanding the variety of elements and the relations among those elements that "characterize the situation of inquiry." She posits that grounded theory should move forward by acknowledging first the "situatedness of knowledge producers" in order to represent "differences" and "multiplicities." She also espouses allowing for multiple analyses of data, making the situation the unit of analysis, focusing on "sensitizing concepts, analytics, and theorizing," as opposed to formal theory, engaging in situational analyses or the analysis of a specific situation through "specification," "re-representation," and "examination" of a variety of elements salient to that particular situation, and lastly Clarke posits the analysis of various forms of discourse to "expand the domains of social life," as ways to push grounded theory further around the turn (P. 19).

Adele's final extension of grounded theory, the inclusion of discourse analysis, which from a critical perspective focuses on power relations and micro-macro level structures, and Charmaz's work, which pushes grounded theory to include social justice work and analyze the ways in which domination and inequality play out, are very

important conceptualizations that answer criticisms of Buroway and other theorists, who posit that grounded theory does not address the issues of power and macro level forces in its undertaking (Charmaz 2006a). Important to this study is engaging in a distinct understanding of the connection between micro level and macro level structures and the ways in which powerful macro structures of dominance and inequality can be legitimized, maintained, and reproduced at the micro level. Using the new interpretations of grounded theory, posited by Charmaz and Clarke (and others), and by focusing specifically on a critical frame analysis, I am able to make this micro-macro level connection.

Critical Frame Analysis

The methodological approach of critical frame analysis examines various components of frames, including cognition, emotional reactions, practices and actions, and most significantly critically analyzing narrative and visual discourses. Here I give much attention to analyzing discourse. Discourse includes the analysis of written and verbal language, nonverbal sources of communication, such as symbols and visual images, and non-human materials (Clarke 2005; Santa Ana 2002; Jaworski and Coupland 1999). In this study I give emphasis to written/verbal discourses as well as visual discourses. The critical work of Foucault and others espouses how discourse encompasses knowledge and power; according to Foucault (1978) in discourse “power and knowledge are joined together.” Written and visual discourse represents the construction of knowledge systems in society, “through which power/knowledge ...operates” (Clarke 2005: 149). Through discourse social dominance is reproduced

(Santa Ana 2002) as discourse maintains power, knowledge, ideologies, and societal control (Clarke 2005) of socially dominant groups in society, leaving certain groups marginalized while others are privileged and dominant group interests are met.

Discursive practices are often unreflective and mark the dominant ideologies of society, through language, actions, and effects, as normative or hegemonic (Santa Ana 2002; Jaworski and Coupland 1999).

In critically analyzing the discourse central to deep frames, I focus on interpretation and explanation. Interpretation is the relationship that exists between the actual text of the discourse and the interaction or the way in which the text of the discourse is a “product of a process of production.” Explanation is an analysis of the relationships that exists between interactions and the social structures of society that shape such interactions (Fairclough 1989:26). Essential to analyzing discourse is underscoring how the prevailing racialized, gendered, and classed deep framing of society and the powerful and dominant classes constructing and controlling such frame determine the dominant discourse. Analyzing discourse, relevant to deep frames, reveals how the discourse everyday individuals employ often aids in “directly or indirectly legitimizing existing power relations” (Fairclough 1989:33). Through using critical frame analysis as a methodological tool, I am able to uncover and deconstruct the powers behind the discourse and the consequences of discursive practices in societies. Clarke (2005) notes that often the “master discourse” or the discourse with the most power is the sole theoretical focus. She notes, however, that discourses of resistances,

marginalized discourses, or oppositional discourses, must be analyzed as well. In this research, I also discuss oppositional discourse espoused by respondents.

While analyzing discourse is a major component of frame analysis and due to the nature of the project will be the main focus of analysis. Critical frame analysis extends beyond analyzing discourse to also examine cognition, smells, sights, and emotions, which are relevant components of deep frames that frame the ways in which white men interpret, understand, think, and emote in regard to black women. I use a critical frame analysis to analyze how the discourse, thoughts, and emotions white men have regarding black women is from the racialized and gendered (and at times classed) deep frame through which white men understand black women and society. The consistent recitation of integral racialized, gendered, and classed segments in the deep frame legitimizes, normalizes, and reproduces the frame as well as disciplines behavior and produces discriminatory practices.

Historical Frame Analysis

In undertaking this project of analyzing the deep frame by which white men view and understand black women, important, I also engage the methodological approach of a historical frame analysis. Historical frame analysis is concerned with analyzing how the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame that white men, view, perceive, and emote in regard to black women has come to be. Engaging a historical analysis is about “problematizing how we have arrived at the present moment, seeking out those elements that each and all had to be in place for this present to ‘happen’” and allows me “to make better sense of contemporary situations of interest” (Clarke 2005: 262-63, 264).

This project, thus engages a sort of genealogy, akin to the work of Foucault, that trace back historically and contemporarily, the white defined construction of knowledge and meaning systems regarding black women; what I refer to as the construction of black female bodies. Of interest here is analyzing how white men have historically and contemporarily, had the power to construct black female bodies, and to essentially create the knowledge, meanings, images, and discourse about black women. This racialized, gendered, and at times classed knowledge represents the deep frame, or deeply embedded world view and “common sense” understanding that white men use to understand, interpret, view, and emote, where black women are concerned.

DATA COLLECTION

To gather participants for this study, purposive sampling, the most common form of sampling for qualitative research, was used, in which participants that fit the research criterion: white, male, 18 and older, were invited to complete a self-administered open-ended questionnaire online. To reach a broad population of potential research participants, from a variety of states, varying ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and experiences with black women, an advertisement sheet was posted on the web based advertisement site, Craigslist, to recruit interested participants. Craigslist is a well known advertisements site that is accessed by over 40 million individuals in the United States each month and that posts advertisements in over 570 cities worldwide (Craigslist 2009). In short, Craigslist reaches a wide audience and was ideal for reaching a diverse sample of white adult males for this study.

As stated above, the design of this study uses online open-ended questionnaires, which is a data collection more characteristic of quantitative analysis (Bryman 2008). However, the design of the questionnaires was developed with a qualitative focus in mind. The open-ended questionnaire was structured in the format of an interview, yet without the ability to probe responses. Consistent with the goals of qualitative analysis the main purpose of the open-ended questionnaire was to gather the richest data possible (Bryman 2008) to analyze the broad research interests of the study. Below, I provide an in-depth rationale for the use of the online open-ended questionnaire in this study as opposed to more traditional qualitative techniques.

Rationale for Online Open-Ended Questionnaire

Due to the framework of this study, including the sensitive subject area, the research technique best called for the use of online open-ended questionnaires as opposed to the traditional qualitative technique of face-to-face interviews or the use of phone interviews or paper questionnaires. By using a self-administered questionnaire, I am able to eliminate the bias that I would cause as a black female researcher asking white men questions on their views of black women in a face-to-face format. Respondents may be more likely to display social desirability bias, or to provide responses that they believe are socially desirable as opposed to their honest thoughts, if interviewed by myself or even other researchers. Research shows that discussing sensitive subjects, such as race, drug abuse, or sexual behavior could lead to socially desirable responses. However, removing the interviewer and using self-administered questionnaires reduce the likelihood of this social desirability bias (Kellner 2004;

Sudman and Bradburn 1982). With this study discussing race, a sensitive subject, in light of United States racial history and present, and in light of the United States moving towards an ideology of “colorblindness,” white male respondents may not be likely to disclose any strong racial views, thoughts, or behaviors in a face-to-face interview with a black female researcher. White male respondents also may not be willing to share their honest racial thoughts with a white male interviewer that they perceive as not having similar views as their own. In short, most people in society, particularly whites, do not want to be perceived as racists. If respondents do hold strong racialized views about black women, in a face-to-face interview format, they may be more likely to use symbolic racism to explain why they do not date black women or find them attractive, by saying such comments as “I just don’t find black women attractive” or “we have different cultural backgrounds.” An older study by Hatchett and Schuman (1975) analyzed the responses of whites to both white and black interviewers, when asked questions about their views on interracial marriage and the intermixing of blacks and whites in schools and neighborhoods. Their study found that whites were more likely to provide responses to black interviewers that were “racially liberal” whereas their responses to white interviewers were more “frank.”

Research by Picca and Feagin (2007) sheds light on the type of racial performances that whites engage in while in certain situations. Their research analyzed the incidents of racism or racist acts, white college students reported in journals over a period of several months. Advancing Erving Goffman’s research on frontstage and backstage performances, Picca and Feagin (2007) find in their study that whites know

when and where to engage in racial performances, resulting in what they refer to as backstage racism. Backstage racism occurs when whites engage in racist and discriminatory racial performances in social settings or social spaces with other whites or people who appear white, that they typically feel comfortable with and have little fear of being reprimanded or “outed.” However, when in the frontstage, around people of diverse racial and ethnic groups or other whites who will not tolerate such racism or whom they are unfamiliar with, these individuals will be more likely to engage in racial performances of “colorblindness” (Picca and Feagin 2007). According to many analysts, strong racial and discriminatory attitudes of the past rarely exist anymore, if it all based on quantitative polls that measure racial attitudes. However, research on backstage racism, shows that much of those strong racists’ views still exist, they have just moved to the backstage as many whites realize that expressing strong racist and discriminatory views in the frontstage is no longer socially acceptable and is now considered politically incorrect. Thus in considering issues of social desirability bias and racial performances, it was best to use the open-ended questionnaire as opposed to the face-to-face interview in this study.

Additionally, phone interviews also posed a problem for this type of research. Although, the telephone interview is not a face-to-face format, respondents may still be likely to engage in social desirability bias, when responding to sensitive questions on race over the phone. This can be a problem whether I conducted the phone interview myself or white men were hired to conduct the interview, because research shows, as stated earlier, that people are not as likely to be as truthful or honest about sensitive

information. Studies also show that telephone interviews tend to be more constrained by time leading to participant responses that are shorter and not as in-depth or detailed (James and Busher 2006). The telephone interview could also be very time consuming as well as limit my ability to reach respondents in different states and regions, due to time zones differences (James and Busher 2006).

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, the online open-ended questionnaire was thus the best method to use, as it was a technique that provided for the best data possible. The online questionnaire has several advantages to the paper questionnaire and other tools of research. Advertising the online questionnaire through a web based news source provided an advantage, as it allowed me to reach a wider audience of potential respondents from a variety of regions, ages, and professions, than just administering a paper questionnaire or engaging in interviews in the southern region that I reside in. One of the criticisms of qualitative work is that it focuses on a very small subset of the population and is limited in generalizability (Bryman 2008). Thus, with this study I sought to reach a wider, more diverse sample of white men who although not a representative sample of the population is a better representation than a small subset of white males in a southern region. Research by Murthy (2008) confirms that the online questionnaire provides for an expansion of respondents as opposed to face-to-face interviews. Research also shows that no substantial differences exist in using an online self-administered questionnaire as opposed to a paper self-administered questionnaire. Respondents are likely to respond the same on both forms of questionnaires (MacCabe 2004; Denscombe 2006) however; the online questionnaire can reach a wider population

of people within a quicker amount of time. Thus, it was an immense advantage to use online questionnaires in this study as opposed to paper questionnaires.

Other research advantages to using the online self-administered questionnaire include the fact that it allows for privacy and thus may be more effective in the answering of sensitive questions (Taylor 2000), as respondents can complete it in the privacy of their homes. The online questionnaire also may allow for lengthy, more personal and detailed answers, than paper questionnaires or telephone interviews (Murthy 2008; James and Busher 2006), as long as the questionnaire consist of no word limits (or only large word limits) on answer responses. The online questionnaire, unlike paper questionnaires, allows the researcher to use skip logic. Depending on a participant's response, the questionnaire will skip to the next relevant question, allowing a small level of probing that paper questionnaires do not. In addition, with the paper questionnaire, respondents are able to read all the questions ahead of time and pick and choose which questions they will answer and which order to answer the question. Through the use of the online self-administered questionnaire, I was able to control the order in which respondents saw the questions and make all the questions mandatory for participating in the study. This ensured that I would have the full essence of how white men view black women and romantic relationships with black women. (In the write-up and analysis of this study, I only used questionnaires from respondents who completed the questionnaire in total. Any respondents that did not want to answer a question were allowed to leave the study at any time).

Research Sample

The research sample included 134 white males, ranging from the age of 18 to over 50, and representing 38 states across various regions. Forty-four percent of the respondents represent the southern region, 20% the northeast, 24% the Midwest, and 12% the western region. Respondents participating in the study were well representative across all age demographics, with 29% of respondents between the age range 18 and 29, 21% between 30 and 39, 28% between 40 and 49, and 23% of respondents age 50 and up. In terms of highest household income levels, 29% of participants had a household income that ranged between \$30,000 and \$49,999 and 19% had a household income that ranged between \$70,000 and \$99,999. The majority of participants had some college education at 42%, while 30% of respondents possessed a bachelor's degree. Regarding experiences with the black community, including neighborhood composition and family interaction with other black families while growing up, a large percentage of the respondents have had very little interactions with blacks. Fifty-five percent of respondents have mainly lived in neighborhoods with only a few black families and 35% have mainly lived in neighborhoods with no black families. Additionally, 24% of respondents indicate never having interactions with other black families while growing up, while 48% of respondents indicate that when growing up, their family rarely interacted with black families (see Table 1).

A central demographic component of this study is the type of experiences and interactions respondents have had specifically with black women, detailed in Tables 2 and 3. I analyze this based on the number of close friendships respondents have or had

Table 1. Experiences with Black Community

Average Neighborhood Composition		Family Interactions with Black Families Growing Up	
No Black Families	35%	Never	24%
A Few Black Families	55%	Rarely	48%
50% Black Families	8%	Often	23%
Other	3%	Very Often	3%
		Other	2%

with black women and respondents level of personal interactions with black women, ranging from no interactions to many interactions. Important here is that the majority of respondents, at 38%, list having no close black female friends, while 31% list having only 1-2 close black female friends (see table 2). Respondents were also asked to detail the amount of personal interactions they have had with black women. Seventeen percent of respondents listed having almost no personal interactions with black women, 29% listed having few personal interactions, 31% stated they had some personal interactions, 23% listed having many personal interactions with black women (see table 2). This question is very subjective, as some respondents may describe saying hello to a coworker on a regular basis as having many personal interactions with black women and some may not. Thus, I also asked a follow-up open-ended question, asking respondents to detail the type of “personal interactions” they have had with black women. Upon analyzing the open-ended responses, I find that most respondents have had service

Table 2. Experiences with Black Women

Friendships with Black Women		Amount of Personal Interactions with Black Women	
No Close Friendships	38%	Almost no Personal Interactions	17%
1-2 Close Friendships	31%	Few Personal Interactions	29%
3-4 Close Friendships	16%	Some Personal Interactions	31%
5 or More Close Friendships	15%	Many Personal Interactions	23%

sector, school, work, friend of friend, and other types of incidental socialization and interactions with black women as opposed to in-depth consistent personal interactions.

In terms of dating, 45% of respondents have “dated” black women, according to their definition of dating, and a slightly larger percentage, 54%, have never dated black women. (This relative higher percentage of respondents that have dated black women is possibly due to their greater interest in the subject matter of dating black women since participation in the project is based on self-selection). Individuals view “dating” in a variety of ways and thus I also asked the respondents who have dated black women to identify the types of “dating” relationships they have had generally had with black women, such as short term, long term, and sexual. Table 3 details the type of dating relationships respondents have had with black women. The majority of respondents state they have mostly had short term and sexual relationships with black women at 34% and 30% respectively (see Table 3). The fact that such a large percentage of respondents have “dated” black women is an important element of this study, because the

Table 3. Relationships with Black Women

Types of “Dating” Relationships with Black Women	
Short-term Dating	34%
Sexual Relationships	30%
Long-term Dating	14%
Long-term Dating Leading to Marriage	0%
Other	20%

Notes: Other: A combination of all relationships or friendship

intermarriage rate and the exclusion of black women as dating options, it is safe to assume that the percentage of white men in the study that list yes to “dating” are not representative of white males in the overall population. In light of the fact that so many participants have dated black women, this study is biased towards participants that have dated black women. However, this study finds that even white men who have essentially “crossed the line” of “dating” black women are also likely to have strong racialized, gendered, and at times classed views of black women, akin the views of white men who have never dated black women, yet they may not as explicitly express those views.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Maintaining high ethical standards to protect the participants and to protect the integrity of this study were of chief importance in this study. The first step taken regarding ethical consideration was to attain approval from the institutional review board (IRB). IRB reviews in detail the components of the study to ensure that all steps are

taken to protect the rights of human subjects, to ensure that participants are not harmed as a result of the study, and to ensure that participants have a choice in participating through the informed consent form.

To engage in proper netiquette (Bryman 2008), and follow the IRB procedures, I posted an information sheet on a web based news site detailing the study, as opposed to cold-sending the questionnaire to potential participants. The information sheet informed potential participants of the research study, detailing the academic nature of the research project, the particulars of project and their role as participants in the study, which would either consist of completing an open-ended questionnaire. Those respondents that decided they were interested in the study could click on a URL link that would connect them to the IRB approved informed consent page. The informed consent page further detailed the purpose of the study, provided the contact information for IRB if they had questions about their rights as participants, and gave potential participants an opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted to participate in the study.

Important in protecting online research respondents is the protecting participants' identity. Protecting the identity of online participants and the online communication between participants and researchers can prove to be difficult in certain online studies, particularly those studies that use email interviewing or communication, instant messaging, and online focus groups or chat room groups (James and Busher 2007; Stewart and Williams 2005). In these types of online studies, it may also be difficult to achieve informed consent from potential participants. Additionally varying views exist

on if informed consent is necessary in online research studies, such as those studies listed above, if the websites are acknowledged public domain (Bryman 2008).

However, in this study, I did not engage in any form of email communication with participants, nor did I use instant messaging or chat room groups to gather potential research participants. In this study, I recruited potential participants through an online news source as opposed to other internet mediums. Those that decided to participate in the study were able to give their informed consent. Participants never had to identify their name, email address, or any other overt identifying information, besides state, occupation status, and other basic biographical data. To further protect the privacy of participants in this study, all participants completed their answers to the survey and questionnaire questions through a secure online survey database that specializes in servicing professional and academic research work. As the researcher, I am the only person with direct access to the respondent questionnaire responses and all questionnaires include no identifying information that can connect a questionnaire with an individual respondent. Thus, in the use of the online self-administrated questionnaire, I am able to avoid many of the ethical concerns that are more prevalent with other online research and better able to ensure participants of their anonymity (Gordon and McNew 2008) in this study.

To ensure the ethical integrity of the study, several steps were taken. Through the secure survey database, I set a limitation so that respondents were only able to complete the questionnaire once from their computer. The survey database tracked the IP of respondent's computers and any respondents that attempted to take the questionnaire a

second time from the same computer would immediately be denied access by the survey database.

Respondents could go to another computer to retake the questionnaire; however, research shows the unlikelihood respondents will do this. Additionally the open-ended questionnaire is very detailed and time consuming, thus the likelihood of respondents repeating the process again from another computer is improbable. Another step taken to ensure the ethical integrity of the study was the advertisement of the study on an online news and advertisement website. Through this site, I was able to provide an information sheet which informed potential participants that this study was a rigorous academic research project as opposed to a study for leisure. By detailing the serious nature of the study, I believe that I was able to weed out some potential participants that may not take the questionnaire process seriously and thus may provide responses to the questions that would not be helpful to the study. Additionally, I only used an online advertisement site to gather participants and did not use online dating sites which could potentially include more bias.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Although the methodological formation of this study has several advantages and in light of the research topic is designed to best gather the most bias free data possible from respondents, this study does have several limitations. An important limitation of the study is the inability of the study to be representative of the total white male population in the United States. Probability sampling, such as simple random sampling

or stratified sampling, found in quantitative research, was not used to gather participants for this study and based on the nature of the study would have been difficult to achieve. Thus, as with most qualitative data, it is difficult to decisively say that this study is representative of white males in the population and it may be difficult to generalize the study. However, through analyzing the population statistics for white males in 2002 (McKinnon 2003) which details the basic demographics of white males, in terms of region, income, and education, I am able to compare the sample of my study to the general white male population, in order to get an idea of how representative my sample is to the overall white male population. The 2002 statistics report that the largest proportion of white males reside in the southern region at 33%, and in my study the largest percentage of participants reside in the south, although my research sample over represents the southern white male population by approximately 10%. The research sample of white male participants represents the northeast and midwest regions at a relatively comparative percentage to the white male population in those regions. In terms of the western region, this research sample under represents the white male population by approximately seven percent.

Another limitation of this study is the socioeconomic bias in using the internet as a form of gathering research participants. Past research shows that those who have higher incomes and people of greater socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have access to computers and the internet (Murthy 2008; Couper 2000). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Computer and Internet Use supplement of 2003 (Day, Janus,

and Davis 2005) families with an income less than \$25,000 a year, used the internet 31.9% whereas, families with an income of \$100,000 or more used the internet at 89.6%. Thus, white men of lower socioeconomic background may find it more difficult to access the online study. An analysis of internet user's overtime from 1984 to 2003 has shown that there has been a distinct increase in the amount of households that own a computer and have access to the internet. Thus, people who traditionally may not have had access to the internet are increasingly having access to it, especially as the internet is more readily available in places outside of one's home.

A final limitation of the study is the issue of authenticating the identity of the research participants in using online research. The use of the online questionnaire makes it more difficult to truly know that participants are who they say they are. Thus, online research presents a greater concern of participants creating inauthentic identities, because the nature of the internet allows a veil of invisibility and because of the anonymity of the study. Although this is a greater issue with the use of online questionnaire, the inability to identify that a person is representative of the demographic requirements of the study, white, male, 18 and over, would also be a problem if telephone interviews (James and Busher 2006) or mailed paper questionnaires were used.

Despite the limitations of this study, a succinct benefit of using the questionnaire online is that the population I was seeking for this study, white men, is the most likely to have a higher socioeconomic background and thus the most likely to have access to computers and the internet, as the Internet and Computer Use supplement shows that

66.5% of non-Hispanic whites use the internet at home, school, or at work. This is the highest among all racial groups.

In the next chapter, I provide a detailed overview of how whites, predominantly elite white men, have historically and contemporarily constructed black female bodies. The domain of knowledge developed by influential whites to define black female bodies is the knowledge embedded in the deep frame, or common sense world view of white men, regarding black female bodies. Thus, this chapter essentially provides a historical frame analysis, detailing how the racialized, gendered, and at times classed deep frame, by which white men today perceive, view, emote, and engage in interactions where black women are concerned has come to be. This chapter is an integral chapter that will later segue into the subsequent chapters analyzing the white male respondents' views on black women.

CHAPTER III

CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK FEMALE BODIES: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY

The female body in the West is not a unitary sign. Rather like a coin, it has an obverse and a reverse: on the one side it is white, on the other, not-white or, prototypically, black. The two bodies cannot be separated, nor can one body be understood in isolation from the other in the West's metaphoric construction of the "woman." White is what woman is: not-white (and the stereotypes not-white gather in) is what she had better not be (O'Grady 1992:14).

Loraine O'Grady, in the quote above, eloquently articulates one of the most fundamental components of the construction of black female bodies; that black female bodies were constructed in opposition to what "woman is" and what she dare not be. To analyze this important point by O'Grady, this chapter details how whites, predominantly elite white men, rooted in their power in society, have historically and contemporarily constructed black female bodies. Whites have constructed a domain of knowledge that defines black women and has come to represent hegemonic black female bodies that are in opposition to the construction of white female bodies, which represent hegemonic femininity. Thus this chapter provides a historical analysis of how the deep frame, or common sense world view, by which white men today view black women, has come to exist. To underscore the origins of this deep frame, I engage a genealogy of the white construction of black female bodies by first providing a historical analysis—rooted in early European travelers and scientists perception, assessment of, and use of visual and verbal discourses regarding tribal African women, particularly the "Hottentot" and the

“Bushmen” (Guy-Sheftall 2002). I also engage a contemporary analysis, showing how the construction of black female bodies is directly influenced by this historical construction. I focus specifically on how white men have historically constructed black women’s “femininity,” “womanhood,” “reproduction,” “beauty,” and “sexuality,” ultimately defining black female bodies as masculine, sexually licentious, anti-woman, and the opposite of hegemonic (white) femininity and beauty. These are central elements in the deep frame of white men today that guide how they think, view, emote, and interact with black women, as we shall see in later chapters with the respondents in this study.

HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK FEMALE BODIES

“The Hottentot Venus”: European Gaze and African Women

Much of the early imaging of black women is rooted in Europeans first encounters with African women. In these first encounters early imaging of black women is created, defining black women as the “other” and “antithetical” to European beauty, “humanity,” and “morality” (Gilman 1985). The early construction of black women as sexually licentious and animalistic was recorded by writings of European travelers throughout Africa, as early as the 15th century (Guy-Sheftall 2002). Most European travelers and scientists focused their analysis primarily on the Khoikhoi, later derogatorily renamed the Hottentot (Guy-Sheftall 2002) and quickly generalized their beliefs of the Hottentot women as primitive and immoral to all black women.

Influential European men quickly began to define the Hottentot woman’s sexuality as pathological, deviant, and in opposition to the white norm. Hottentot

women, most notably Saartjie Baartman, were studied and examined. During Baartman's short life she (alongside an animal trainer) was put in Paris and London freak shows to show the white audiences her "primitive" sexual body parts (Guy-Sheftall 2002). Upon her death Baartman and other black women were dissected by European scientist Georges Cuvier, to show evidence of their "primitive genialities" (Gilman 1985). Every component of their bodies, including sexual organs, were deemed pathological and presented as evidence of their inferiority as a race. It was believed that the "voluptuousness" of their bodies was proof of the overdevelopment of their sexual organs, it was believed that their large buttocks was a sign of their disfigurement, that the narrow pelvis of Baartmann representative of the primitivity of their "anatomical structure" and their place as a "lower race," and their vaginas a symbol of their primordial and insatiable "sexual appetites" (Gilman 1985). (See figure 1 for an illustration of Baartmann in white men's minds.) European scientists also came to connect prostitution with black women. Work by Adrian Charpy in the late 1870's, helped form this connection in his "finding" of similarity between the stretched labia of prostitutes and the labia of the Hottentot women, which had been elongated through manipulation, a tribal practice. Black women became succinctly and inextricably connected with prostitution and prostitution with black women; grounded in a belief of prostitution as the bane of primitive cultures and black women as the epitome of primitivism (Gilman 1985). With the racist work of European scientists, by the end of the 1800's, the definition of Black women as innate immorality and sexual insatiability was a biological "fact" (Hammonds 1997).



Figure 1. Saartjie Baartman: “The Hottentot Venus” (Leon de Wailley)

Much analysis and research by European scientists focused on blacks, as they sought to show evidence of what many believed to be the subspecies status of blacks, proving indefinitely that blacks were “as different from Europeans as the proverbial orangutan.” Through “science,” blacks became connected with innate animalism and black women, specifically, were attributed with inborn animalistic sexuality and physical

qualities. Many influential Europeans indeed animalized black women in their descriptions of their features, bodies, and “licentious sexual behavior.” Several influential Europeans, including the French naturalist Buffon and the author Edward Long, claimed that black women engaged in sexual copulation with apes (Gilman 1985; Morgan 2002). Consider here this description of Saartjie Baartmann, by Cuvier, as he uses multiple animal descriptors.

Everyone who had been able to see her over the course of eighteen months...could verify the enormous protuberance of her buttocks and the brutal appearance of her face. . . .Her movements had something of a brusqueness and unexpectedness, reminiscent of those of a monkey. In particular, she had a way of pushing out her lips in the same manner we have observed in the Orangutan. Her personality was happy, her memory good, after several weeks she recognized a person she had only seen one time. . . .she spoke tolerably good Dutch , which she learned at the Cape. . . .also knew a little English. . . .was beginning to say a few words in French (Sharpley-Whiting 1999: 26).

Sharpley-Whiting (1999), a professor of French and African American studies, notes that in Cuvier’s description of Baartmann as beastly, he “reduces” her abilities to speak various languages quickly and have good memory as nothing more than that of a “learned, domesticated beast” with a “semianlike” ability to mimic the European race. This description of Baartmann is akin to how all African women and “Negro” women were viewed by influential Europeans and whites in general, essentially as “the next of kin” to apes, monkeys, and orangutans (Sharpley-Whiting 1999).

Coupled with the construction of black women as animalistic was the depiction of black women as emotionally detached, strong, and masculine. European travelers wrote in their journals, during the 1600’s and 1700’s, descriptions of black women as

emotionally detached from the child bearing process; black women who were strong and “brutish” enough to forgo rest after child birth and resume their day to day business the next day. In Edward Long’s (1774) work, *The History of Jamaica*, he provided descriptions of African women “animalistically” bearing children with ease and little labor pain. Based on this belief he then purports that black women were thus unmarked with the “curse” of Eve; child birthing pain.

Their women are delivered with little or no labour; they have therefore no more occasion for midwives, than the female orang-outang, or any other wild animal. A woman brings forth her child in a quarter of an hour....Some have even been known to bring forth twins without a [s]hriek, or [s]cream; and it is [s]eldom they are confined above two...or three days....the negroes are perfuaded that either the mother, the child, or one of the parents will die during the period of lying-in. Thus they seem exempted from the cur[s]e inflicted upon Eve and her daughters... (P. 380).

The latter description is an important construction of the black woman in the European male mind, in that if black women are viewed as having painless labor and not receiving the curse of Eve, then black women are thus not on the same plane with Europeans (Morgan 2002) but on a plane with animals, and thus befitted for inhumane treatment. This early European gaze of black women as strong and masculine with animalistic sexuality and reproductive capabilities marked black women as “savage” and inherently different from Europeans (Morgan 2002). This believed savagery acted as evidence of black women’s usefulness as slaves and justification for that slavery. This notion became deeply embedded in the conventional deep frame of whites, that of black women as biologically inferior. Although society has shifted, at least publicly, to the more modern notion of cultural inferiority, whites continue to espouse this conventional deep frame

notion of the innate biological inferiority of blacks, as we shall see later with a couple of white male respondents in this study.

Sexuality, Reproduction, and Black Motherhood

The early construction of African women as savage, with innate “animalistic” characteristics of reproduction and sexuality, the licentious jezebel (Collins 2005), became the justification for black women’s use as American slaves and for the sexual exploitation of black women. This construction of black female sexuality is tantamount in the deep frame of white men. Based on the notion of an animal sexuality it was believed that black women could not be raped, that black slave women gave of their bodies freely to black male slaves, with no thought of impropriety. White men believed that black women’s animalistic nature allowed them to seek from black women “uninhibited sex” that they could not receive from “virtuous” white women (Guy-Sheftall 2002). Influential American leader and President Thomas Jefferson ([1785] 1991), in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* reiterated earlier assessments of black women and sexual animalism, he states.

Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favour of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oranootan for the black women over those of his own species (P.145).

Here Jefferson alludes to the orangutan preferring the black women as a partner as opposed to his own species, unequivocally placing black women’s sexuality on the same plane as animals. Here you can see the early workings of the deep frame as Jefferson has already learned and regurgitated derogatory notions of black women and orangutans

expressed earlier by Europeans in the 1700's. Other influential whites have also provided ideals of black women as animalistic, inhibiting them with a sexuality that white men could exploit. In Thomas Pierce Bailey's (1914) book *Race Orthodoxy in the South and Other Aspects of the Negro Question*, he provides a description held by many whites of the black woman's sexuality:

And the memory of antebellum concubinage and a tradition of animal satisfaction due to the average negro woman's highly developed animalism are factors still in operation. Not a few "respectable" white men have been heard to express physiological preference for negro women. If therefore animal appetite may become more powerful than race pride, it is not surprising that race hatred is superinduced upon those who offend against race purity; for abnormal sexuality easily develops brutality... Thus the element of kindness that often belongs to concubinage yields to a mere animal convenience that may be consistent with race enmity on the part of the white offender... Thus does the negro woman become more and more a cheap convenience of the occasional sort, and the purity of the white race is protected at the expense of the white man's appreciation of the negro woman's personality (P. 43).

In this quote, Thomas Bailey makes a clear connection between black women and innate animal sexuality as "inherent" of the "average" "negro woman's personality."

The construction of black women as animalistic "hyper-sexuality" (Hammonds 1997) was a construction wrought with benefits for whites during this time, in that it was not only the basis for black women's sexual exploitation by white men but also used to define black women as having animalistic reproductive capabilities, an important slave duty for black women (Kapsalis 2002). Enslaved black women had no "autonomy over their reproduction" (Roberts 1997) as control over their reproductive capabilities was of grave importance for white slave owners because through reproduction, interminable

black slave classes were recreated. Black women, during slavery, were used as breeders to breed new chattel slaves. Their children, whether copulated with black male slaves or white masters and overseers, were the property of her white owner (Collins 2005). To maintain the slave status of children born of enslaved black women and white men, Virginia laws decreed that the mulatto children of enslaved black women took on the status of the mother and defined mulatto children as black. With the outlaw of the transatlantic slave trade in the early 1800's, white slave owners had an increased interest in black women's reproductive capacities (Roberts 1997; White 1985). Coercive steps were taken to increase the likelihood of black female slave's reproduction; including "rewarding" female's slaves bearing several children with a lighter labor load and punishment for slave women who did not reproduce. Enslaved women who did not bear children faced being sold to other plantations or enduring harsh "retribution" from their slave owners (Roberts 1997).

Female slaves that had gynecological issues, most notably vesico-vaginal fistulas that could alter their reproductive capacity or limit their sexual availability to their white owners, were deemed a financial liability. During the mid to late 1840's, in Alabama, J. Marion Sims, who later became the "Father of American Gynecology" operated on many enslaved black women with vesico-vaginal fistulas. These women were used as guinea pigs and were non-consenting participants in the gynecological medical experiments of Sims, which included multiple vaginal surgeries without anesthetics. The manipulation and interest in black women's reproductive organs at this time was rooted in enhancing the "procreative abilities" of enslaved black women,

ensuring their white masters of their sexual availability and an economic return on their property; the reproduction of new slave children (Kapsalis 2002).

Although, there was much focus on enslaved black women's reproductive capabilities, little attention was given to black women as mothers as black motherhood during slavery was denigrated and disregarded. Roberts (1995:390) notes that black women were "systematically denied the rights of motherhood." Enslaved black women had no rights to their children, whether those already born or any future children she might have, as these future unborn children were often bequeathed to family members, in the wills of whites slave owners. Enslaved women had no control over when their children would begin working in the fields, would be hired out to provide labor for other whites for period of years, or would be sold away. These decisions were decided by the white slave owners.

The emphasis for white slave owners was on protecting and increasing enslaved black women's reproductive capacities, not on respecting the humanity of the mother that would bear the children. Pregnant enslaved women were still beaten for whatever perceived offense, however, some slave owners took "precautionary" steps to protect the unborn child. A former Mississippi slave stated that when she seen "nigger women that was fixin to be confined do somethin' de white folks don't like. Dey [the white folks] would dig a hole in de ground just big' nuff fo' her stomach, make her lie down an whip her on de back to keep from hurtin' de child" (Johnson 1981:513). The way in which enslaved pregnant black women were beaten according to Roberts (1995) is representative of "a fetal protection policy that denies the humanity of the mother."

Sojourner Truth in her 1851 speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Ohio, spoke clearly to the denial of enslaved black women's motherhood, when she stated: "...I have borne thirteen children and seen em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and ar'n't I a woman" (Gilbert [1878] 1991 [1878]: 134).

From the historical perspective, whites' belief of black women's sexuality as "animalistic" with animalistic reproductive capabilities was not only a denigration of black women as sexually licentious, but this perception was viewed as an economic benefit for whites in the slave systems. In post slavery times, as the belief in the "animalistic" reproductive capabilities of black women no longer benefitted whites in the continued reproduction of a slave class, whites moved towards stamping down black women's the sexual reproduction through divisive sterilization schemes and policies. However, regardless of white desire or lack of desire for black women's sexual reproduction, it remains that an important construction of black women in the deep frame is that of uncontrollable fertility.

Sexual Exploitation Continued: Black Women Denied Protections

With the already firm construction of black female bodies as sexual licentiousness in the deep frame of white men, the sexual exploitation of black women continued throughout slavery, Louisiana placage, and legal segregation. Coupled with white men's sexual exploitation of black women was also a desire for black women, particularly for those that looked more phenotypically white. Based on physical appearance some enslaved black women and Creole mistresses in the Louisiana placage

system were provided more latitude than other black women. During slavery mulatto (of Black and white ancestry), slave women were sought after and paid for handsomely as sex slaves, called "fancy girls," for their white master's (Davis 1941; White 1985). These women often sold for over thousands of dollars to white slaver owners and were often used as sex slaves and domestic workers for the household. White (1985) notes that some of these enslaved women gained certain benefits as the concubines of their slave owners, and were able to garner certain material possessions, and eventually earn freedom for themselves and their children. Although some of these women may have gained certain benefits, the majority of these women, faced the same fate, hardships, and exploitation, of most other slaves, such as being sold away at a whim, experiencing the hardships of slavery for their entire lives, or being separated from their children.

As noted, black women with fair skin color (often of European ancestry) had greater social mobility than women of darker skin tones (Elder 1969) and it garnered them some "benefits" in a system of exploitation. Despite the fact that light skin color and European features garnered some black women benefits, these women, historically, have been exploited and were still not garnered the same benefits and privileges of white women. The system of placage in Louisiana is an intricate example of the pseudo upward mobility that women with both African and European ancestry could garner. Placage was an "institutional arrangement of miscegenation," during the centuries of slavery in which wealthy French and Spanish creoles took free women of color as mistresses. These women of color were often quadroons, women who have one-fourth black ancestry and three-fourths white ancestry. The women garnered many benefits as

mistresses; the white men built them modest homes, cared for and educated the children, and provided the women with financial assistance. However, the women typically could not leave the man of their own accord and the relationship was unstable, as the men would often leave when they married a white woman. However, some white men did operate dual households of a white wife and quadroon mistress. These women had more benefits than slaves did yet they could be whipped as slaves, their interactions with whites were sanctioned, and most important, they were legally forbid from marrying white men (Early 1947).

After the end of slavery and placage systems, the sexual exploitation of black women continued throughout legal segregation. Based on black women's status as black women, white men (as well as black men) were free to take advantage of them sexually, without punishment. In legal segregation, institutionalized rape was used as a tool of social control to "subordinate" black women and all black women were susceptible to rape by white men. During slavery a slave master owned and controlled the body of Black women; she was chattel. Yet with the end of slavery and the era of individual rights and Jim Crow legislation, Black women were no longer owned by a "few white men," and in legal segregation "became sexually available to all white men" (Collins 2005). Any white man could rape her now, since she was no longer personal property and since the laws were not designed to protect her womanhood (Collins 2005). During legal segregation, black women who worked as domestic servants or in the fields as share croppers for white's were daily faced with the possibility of sexual proposition or

rape, as white men took advantage of the liberties that the law provided them and the protection it denied black women.

Many black women feared for themselves and their daughters being accosted by white men in such a degrading fashion. Fannie Barrier Williams recalls receiving several letters from black women during the late 1800's "begging" her to "find employment for their daughters according to their ability...to save them from going into the homes of the South as servants, as there is nothing to save them from dishonor and degradation" (Williams 1904). One black woman recalls working as a cook in a white family's home and being physically approached:

Soon after I was installed as a cook he walked up to me, threw his arms around me, and was in the act of kissing me, when I demanded to know what he meant, and shoved him away. I was young then, and newly married, and didn't know then what has been a burden on my heart and mind ever since; that a colored woman's virtue in this part of the country has no protection" ("We Are Little More than Slaves" 1912:155-156)

The law afforded her no protection as this woman's husband was jailed and fined for approaching the white man who accosted her ("We Are Little More than Slaves" 1912).

The circumstances of sexual exploitation for black female workers in white environments was pervasive and in many instances black women had to acquiesce to white men's sexual advances, for fear of losing their only source of income. Thus white men constructed black female bodies constructed as black female bodies as free to be exploited by white men (and black men), often without fear of retribution, as black women were constructed as unworthy of the protections of white women. This construction of black female bodies as a site by which white men can release uninhibited

sexual desires is an important element in the deep frame of white men, as we shall see with the white male respondents in later chapters.

Black Women and Femininity: Gender Ideology

Another important component central to the deep frame of white men is the construction of black women as anti-feminine and the opposite of hegemonic femininity. Traditional gender ideology for women, “middle-class, heterosexual, white femininity,” is the hegemonic femininity in American society, yet by way of the historical American foundation of oppressive chattel slavery, was never meant to represent black women (or black men) (Collins 2005). Femininity was described in terms of a woman’s outward appearance and defined based on a white normative standard in which women with white skin, a slim body figure, aquiline features, and a straight hair texture, were the most beautiful women and ultimately considered the most feminine women (Collins 2005). The white construction of beauty and thus femininity excludes the possibility of black women’s beauty and femininity because “black women can never become white” (Collins 2005) and by way of definition femininity, and all that it entails, was never designed to include black women. Influential white figures have long assessed black women’s beauty as inferior to whites and akin to animalistic qualities. Jefferson ([1785] 1991:145) in *Notes on the State of Virginia* describes what he believes is the “superior beauty” of whites and how the “fine mixtures of red and white” are “preferable to that eternal monotony... that immovable veil of black...”

Femininity was also defined in terms of purity, a need for protection, subordination to and support from a man. As aforementioned in the earlier sections,

black women were raped by white men, during slavery and legal segregation, which stripped them of their “purity” (Collins 2005). Black men could not protect black women against rape and violence during slavery and legal segregation, as traditional gender ideology calls men to do, because under the oppressive system of slavery, black men were not allowed the status of men in society. Slavery did not allow for black men to provide for black women, because women engaged in the same rigid labor as black men and the benefits of that labor went to their white owners. Essentially, the tenets of slavery prevented black men and black women from participating in traditional gender ideology. Traditional gender ideology, during slavery, created a hierarchy of masculinity and femininity that did not just place blacks at the bottom of the hierarchy, but excluded them altogether. The exclusion of black women from traditional gender ideology is central to the construction of black women as the “anti-woman.” In place of traditional white femininity, white constructed images such the sexual jezebel, as discussed earlier in the section on sexuality, the mammy, and the matriarch are images and myths used to construct black women as the opposite of white femininity. The following sections discuss the construction of the mammy and matriarch myths in the deep frame.

The Black Mammy Myth. The black mammy creation was an oppositional myth to the sexually licentious black jezebel. The mammy myth was needed to provide imagery of trustworthy, respectable and honest enslaved black women who could work in white households and care for white children. According to White (1985), the mammy imagery comes out of the notions of the “benign slave tradition” and the “cult of domesticity.” The construction of mammy is representative of the ideal white patriarchal

society, in which the mammy image characterizes both an ideal slave and an ideal woman (White 1985) that knows her subordinated place and role and has “accepted her subordination” (Collins 2000). Mammy is presented as heavy set, unattractive, and as an asexual, non-tempting body (see figure 2). An integral component of the white constructed mammy image is that mammy is representative of the duly subordinated black woman who passes on to her own children ideals of their proper subordinated place in a white society. Thus mammy aids in the perpetuation of racial oppression (Collins 2005). Collins states that “as members of African American families who are most familiar with the skills needed for Black accommodation, Black mothers are encouraged to transmit to their own children the deference behavior that many are forced to exhibit in their mammified jobs.” Essentially, the construction of the black mammy, specifically for those black women who truly take on the mammy role, acts as an important tool by which new generations of blacks learn to show deference to whites and learn their “assigned place in a white power structure” (Collins 2000).

The construction of the black mammy is wrought with mythology and idealized images of black female servility, subordination, and loyalty to a white patriarchal society. She is representative of the “ideal black female relationship to elite white male power” (Collins 2000) and the mammy image was needed as a form of justification for whites (White 1985). The construction of the black jezebel image allowed whites to justify “miscegenation” and the explicit rape of black women, however, the jezebel image could not “calm Southern fears of moral slippage, and “mongrelization,” or man’s fear of woman’s emasculating sexual powers” (White 1985). The construction of the

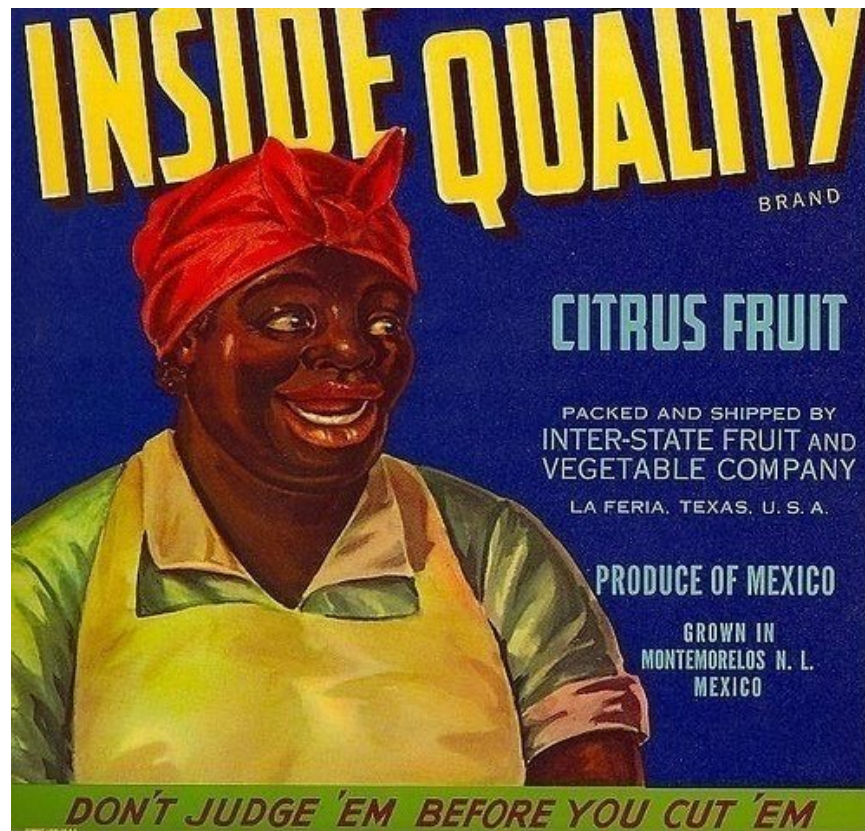


Figure 2. Cartoon “Mammy” Image

mammy image could ease these fears as it helped to “endorse” the indelible service black women were to provide for white homes “as well as the close contact between whites and blacks that such service demanded” (White 1985). Markedly hooks (1981:83-84) also notes that “the mammy figure was portrayed with affection by whites because it epitomized the ultimate sexist-racist vision of ideal black womanhood—complete submission to the will of whites...a mother figure who gave all...who not only acknowledged her inferiority to whites but who loved them.”

Myth of the Black Matriarch. Many of the stereotypes that developed of black women were rooted in the “anti-woman” (hooks, 1981). An important and intricate myth that developed and a central component of the construction of black women as anti-woman is the matriarch myth. While the construction of the black mammy myth was representative of the good servile black woman, the matriarch myth is that of the “bad” black mother (Collins 2000) and wife. According to hooks (1981) during the early 1900’s and the era of the “Cult of True Womanhood” black women focused on motherhood, as a way to take emphasis away from the prevailing myths of black women’s sexuality in society, that of the black jezebel. hooks states that black women focused their time on working and sacrificing in order to provide economic assistance for their families. However, the hard work and self-sacrifice that black mothers and wives provided for their families, often similar roles that poor and widowed white women provided for their children, was taken as a negative pathology as white scholars labeled black women emasculating matriarchs (hooks 1981). Theories of black women as matriarchs, rooted in the work of white social scientist in the 1960s, such as Daniel Moynihan, described black women as pathological for taking on large roles as economic providers in the black family, while black men were heavily unemployed. According to hooks (1981), the notion of a black matriarch is problematic, because a matriarch assumes that a woman has “social and political power.” However, black women, both historically and today continue to be one of the most economically impoverished classes in society and exercise little to no political power. Despite the abject inaccuracy of the matriarch myth, black women often took pride in the black matriarch myth as it was

seemingly more positive than other denigrating myths and stereotypes against black women (hooks 1981).

This myth was used to tell black women that they had “overstepped the bounds of femininity” by working outside of the home; that they had in affect castrated black men. Social scientists claimed that an exponential number of single black mothers existed, because emasculating black women made black men abandon the family home, by not taking on traditional gender roles. Through the matriarchal stereotype, white oppressors were able to “socialize” black men into believing that black women and only black women, were the cause of their economic problems and thus the castrators of their masculinity (hooks 1981) and black women were encouraged to surrender their “assertiveness,” take a subordinate role to black men and let them lead (Collins 2005). Black family problems, of poverty or single motherhood, were presented as being due to their “failure to achieve normal complementary gender roles adequately” (Collins 2005) and particularly blamed on black women for taking on “prominent” roles in the family, not on the affects of living in a systemically racist and discriminatory society, that affects the employment of black men and the income of black families. In essence, black women had to work and take on “non- traditional” roles for family survival. hooks (1981) notes that although there was much derision to all women working outside of the home, including white women, white women did not receive the attachment of the matriarchy and masculine stereotype that black women did. The stereotype of the emasculating black matriarch further enshrined black women as “masculine” and “anti-woman” (hooks 1981) and packaged black mothers and wives as pathological and

deviant to hegemonic, white, femininity. This deep frame view of black women as domineering, emasculating, matriarchs was often expressed by the white male respondents in this study. As we shall see in later chapters, several white male respondents expressed belief in black women as domineering and often used this to claim black women as an unwanted and unattractive.

CONTEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK FEMALE BODIES

The contemporary construction of black female bodies is firmly rooted in the historical construction of black female bodies by influential white men. Black women continue to be constructed as sexually licentious jezebels, “too strong” domineering, modern mammies, and continue to be represented as the opposite of hegemonic beauty and femininity. These controlling images and knowledge domains of contemporary black women are strong elements in the deep frame of white men today and often the tinted lens of the frame proffers how many white men perceive, interpret, emote, relate, and interact with black women. In contemporary times identifying the source of power, whites, behind the images and knowledge domain defining black women, is difficult. Power is more elusive in contemporary times, and is not just top down, but highly visible and repressive. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is everywhere, including the body (Foucault 1977). The power of whites is normalized in society and it may appear difficult to identify the power structures behind such images and knowledge domains regarding black female bodies. However, as the historical section shows, the creation of knowledge regarding black women derives from influential European men. The contemporary construction of black female bodies is firmly grounded in this historical

construction, albeit with some variation and complexity. And as in the past, influential white men in contemporary society play an integral role in creating knowledge about black female bodies.

Black Women and Contemporary Sexuality

Collins (2005) states “Western religion, science, and media took over 350 years to manufacture an ideology of black sexuality that assigned (heterosexual) promiscuity to Black people and then used it to justify racial discrimination.” Indeed the construction of black female bodies as a modality of sexual promiscuity has throughout the course of American history and early European history taken years of fostering and implementing, by whites. And in contemporary times, black women as a site of sexual promiscuity, deviance, and unrestraint continues to be widespread throughout society, promoted and projected on black women both within the broader dominant white society as well as within the black community. As in the past, white men constructed black women as jezebels; today, black women are still constructed as modern jezebels or “bad” black women (hooks 1981) who are sexually immoral “hoochies,” which is more fully ascribed to poor and working class black women (Collins 2000).

In contemporary times the presentation of black women as hypersexualized is most readily shown through globalized media images, including black music videos, television shows, advertisements, and movies. Adding to the continued construction of black female bodies as hypersexualized, is a new updated version of the jezebel, the modern jezebel. In this modern construction, the modern jezebel is a black woman who is essentially a hypersexualized “gold digger” that “trades sexual favors for jobs, money,

drugs, and other material items” (Collins 2005). The modern black jezebel image is an integral theme in hip hop music, most readily shown in music videos as well as other global media productions. In terms of the music videos, many of these videos, whether hip hop or even rhythm and blues, show black women engaging in sexually suggestive dances and gyrations, their body parts ogled by men, in most instances black men, who as Collins (2005) notes shows black male popular culture’s willingness to embrace patriarchy. Tricia Rose (2008: 119) in her work *The Hip Hop Wars* notes that “the most visible representations of black women in hip hop reflect the hallmarks of mainstream masculinity: They regularly use women as props that boost male egos, treat women’s bodies as sexual objects and divide women into groups that are worthy of protection and respect and those that are not.” Thus, Rose (2008) notes that hip hop, just like society in general, is a site of patriarchal authority subsumed with “gender inequality” and the sexualization of female bodies. However, hip hop has represented one of the sites of “excessive margins where these ideas are more harshly represented.” Through the global mass media and commodification of hip hop, the sexualization of black female bodies, the portrayal of the “modern black jezebel” and due to the lack of other positive images of black women, this construction of the modern jezebel represents the quintessential black women in much of society today. People, particularly whites, or individuals from other countries who have never interacted with black women, can view the various globalized videos and media images of black women, that support a deep frame construction of black female bodies as eliciting sex, and project these notions on all black women.

However, in order for these images to exist, black women must play the role, and indeed some black women play the role of the sexualized “video vixen.” For some this can be seen as a means to an end, a way to make money. Being a “video girl,” could be a proverbial “come up,” to relative notoriety and some level of financial stability and possible wealth. The perceived ends of being a “video girl” could outweigh the fact that far too often, but not always, the sexualized role diminishes black women and provides a catalyst for the modern black jezebel construction. Comparatively, Rose (2008) notes that several of the most commercially successful female rappers in hip hop, such as Trina, Lil’ Kim, and Foxy Brown, also play the hypersexualized role, or what Rose refers to as the “black female—required sex card in hip hop.” Thus, similar to black women who play the modern jezebel through the “video girl” persona, several of the most popular commercial black female rappers play the modern jezebel character; the reserved space for black women in hip hop and in society in general.

Important here, however, is that most of the music industries behind the promotion and production of hip hop music are white controlled. Additionally, young white male consumers have become “the most lucrative and preferred market,” (Watkins 2006) as they are the largest segment of the purchasing audience of hip hop music. With this comes a formula to keep up sells and to promote the music that will be purchased by the masses, whites, predominantly young white males, as “white consumers drive the consumption and production of rap music” (Watkins 2006). Noting that the industry is run mainly by whites and that a large portion of the purchasing audience of hip hop music are young white youth is Angela Burt-Murray, the *Essence* magazine editor, in a

forum discussion on the TV One show Sharp Talk With Al Sharpton. Burt-Murray poignantly states that these white industries and the predominantly white purchasers of hip hop music “don’t care about little black girl’s self-esteem,” as the negative and sexualized images of black women are not about them and do not affect them. Burt-Murray is correct, these white controlled industries are going to produce and promote what sells. Black women take the brunt; however, as these hypersexualized images of black female bodies in globally accessible music videos (as well as other media venues) come to represent black women on the whole. And despite the fact that many misogynist and sexualized images of white women, those images do not come to represent white female bodies on the whole (particularly in the United States).

With the construction and reservation of the sexualized role for black woman, another important issue that arises is that often black women’s agency and sexual liberation becomes lost. In terms of hip hop music, Collins (2005) notes that black females in hip hop, who may be “sexually open” does not mean that they are a “ho,” and Rose (2008) notes that the engagement of sexually explicit lyrics by black women in hip hop may not always be exploitative. Outside of hip hop music and videos, Evelyn Hammonds (1997) notes that even within the academy, black women find it difficult to discuss and theorize about black female sexuality, because as representatives of black female bodies they are “already threatened with being sexualized and rendered inauthentic as knowledge producers in the academy.” Essentially, due to the construction of black female bodies as innate sexuality, discussing black female sexuality, critically and in a sexually liberating fashion, is a difficult process. Hammonds

(1997) notes black female bodies are “simultaneously ever-visible (exposed) and invisible, where black women’s bodies are already colonized.” Thus, black female bodies are hypersexualized in most anything they do, even in resisting against that hypersexualization. In Chapter VI, we will see how several white male respondents in the study, many of whom ascribe very negative personal attributes to black women, project a licentious sexuality on black female bodies, and seek out sexual relationships with black women for the “taboo” and “exotic” experience.

Reproduction and Black Motherhood

The contemporary construction of black women as having animalistic reproductive capacity and as “bad” black mothers is another important segment in the deep frame of whites. Historically the construction of black female bodies as uncontrolled reproduction was considered positive to whites as the reproduction of new black slave bodies brought economic returns (Kapsalis 2002; Roberts 1997) to white slave owners and everyone explicitly and implicitly benefitting from the system of slavery. However, in contemporary times, with the projected increase of people of color in the United States and the stagnated growth of the white population, black women’s sexuality and reproduction is no longer an economic benefit. In the deep frame of whites, the construction of black women as sexually fervent with uncontrollable reproductive capacity has come to represent a threat to whites. This is also coupled with the construction of black women as bad black mothers. From this context, great pains have been taken to reduce or eliminate black women’s procreative capacity through

coercive and invasive birth control treatments, and according to Roberts (1997), for some black women reproduction has in fact, become a crime.

Criminalizing Reproduction. The historic and present denigration of black motherhood and the belief in “bad” black mothers by whites has resulted in poor black women’s disproportionate experience of sterilization, the removal of their children from the home, and criminal convictions for drug use while pregnant compared to other women in society (Roberts 1997). The devaluation of black motherhood, in the deep frame of whites, is rooted in the construction of the sexually licentious black woman (Roberts 1997), beliefs in black women as disconnected from the childbirth process and as having animalistic reproductive capacities. Poor pregnant black women addicted to crack-cocaine are most likely to either have their children removed from them temporarily or permanently, or to be jailed. Poor black women addicted to drugs are likely to be affected by such policies, because they have a higher likelihood of relying on welfare and public hospitals, regulated by the government, and thus are under greater surveillance. Additionally, poor black women are more likely to be criminalized, because the focus is particularly on crack-cocaine, a racialized drug more commonly found in poor black communities; despite the fact alcohol and marijuana use during pregnancy cause harmful effects on the fetus and are common forms of drug abuse during pregnancy (Roberts 1997).

According to Roberts (1997) the focus for the prosecution of drug addicted black mothers is not based on the drug use but is based primarily on the fact that the women are pregnant and choose to continue their pregnancy. Rooted in the deep frame, is the

belief of defunct black motherhood. Roberts (1997) notes that this is indeed the case as black women who are pregnant receive harsher penalties than black women drug abusers who are not. The only way drug addicted pregnant black women can avoid criminal charges is by consenting to abort their babies (Roberts 1997). Additionally, the consistent lack of concern for poor black children and the lack of prenatal care provided to poor black mothers make suspicious the government's argument for conviction as the protection of a black fetus. This criminalization of poor black mothers and the coercion of abortions show how whites' deep frame, defining black women as defunct mothers, influences the type of policies created where black women are concerned.

Outside of the criminalization and forced abortions of drug addicted black mothers is the preponderance of sterilization schemes focused on black women (and poor women of color in general). Rooted in the deep frame, is black women with unrestrained reproductive capacities and the contemporary notion of that reproduction as a threat to white society. Thus, Norplant a temporary sterilization drug "surgically implanted in the arm" (Kapsalis 2002) has been pushed on poor black women. Norplant, because it must be surgically implanted and removed is susceptible to "institutional abuse," (Kapsalis 2002) since doctors administer it, thus mothers do not have ultimate control over its use. The projections of increased populations of color that will one day outnumber white populations, the argument of black women as welfare abusers, and the general devaluation of black motherhood all play an integral role in the pushing of Norplant on black women.

In an analysis of 1990s Norplant advertisements, Kapsalis (2002) finds that white women are typically portrayed in the advertisements with their children and husband. The captions portray the white mother as already starting her family, but deciding to take some time off in between children or having already conceived her desired amount of children. In the Norplant advertisement featuring a black woman, she is alone, without children or family, and economic reasons are listed as her reasons for using Norplant. In Kapsalis's analysis of the ads, she finds that black women are reminded that Norplant is a tool that allows them to be economically responsible and to forgo children until they are financially capable economic contributors to society. Whereas during slavery black girls and women were encouraged and forced to reproduce due to its economic return for white colonizers, with surgical procedures designed to increase that possibility. In contemporary times, black child birthing is deemed an economic burden on society; one that must now be discouraged through a new form of reproductive control, sterilization. Norplant and other forms of reproductive control directed towards black women (and other women of color) act to "restore racial balance to the U.S. population," (Kapsalis 2002) by impeding the reproduction of socially undesirable populations, people of color, while maintaining and increasing, through new reproductive technologies, socially desirable groups, whites.

Similar to crack addicted pregnant mothers facing criminal convictions if they do not abort, poor black women have also been placed in coercive situations in which they are to choose between temporary sterilization and jail time. For example, the case of Darlene Johnson, convicted of child abuse, was told by a judge to either choose between

a jail sentence and the implantation of Norplant (Kapsalis 2002; Roberts 1997). Other forms of coercion include the proposals of certain states in the early 1990s to offer women receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children cash incentives for implanting Norplant or for getting irreversible sterilization. According to such proposals, those women, who choose not to get temporary or permanent sterilization, and have another child, could risk having her “welfare” benefits revoked. Kapsalis (2002) makes the causal connection between contemporary and historical times—that enslaved black women were coerced through reduced work load incentives to have children, whereas, in contemporary times, poor black women are being coerced through cash incentives to stop their reproduction. Ultimately, here again is another example of the deep frame of whites in operation. As whites construct black female bodies as reproductive threats, “bad” mothers, and welfare usurpers, they create discriminatory policies to “stop” such behavior.

Welfare Mothers: Worthiness, Sexuality, and Reproduction. Central to the racialized, gendered, and classed construction of black female bodies, embedded in the deep frame of whites, is the ascription of welfare on black female bodies. Within the last several decades, dominant public discourse has greatly presented welfare as a poor black woman’s issue. However, welfare with its inception has been essentially a white phenomenon as historically several racist and discriminatory practices were put in place to keep blacks (and other people of color) from receiving welfare aid.

Early welfare programs were geared towards “worthy” white women widows with children, while poor black mothers were excluded. During the Progressive Era, an

era concerned with the role of women and children's maternal supervision, reformers started a movement to provide mother's pensions that would allow those mothers deemed "worthy," to stay home and care for their children. Mother's Pension laws became written in law in 40 states by 1921. The mother's pension only benefitted 3% of black women, with an overwhelming 96% of mother's pension recipients in 1931 reporting their race as white (Abramovitz 1996). Discrimination in welfare continued with the development of new social welfare programs, including the New Deal, during the economic destitution of the great depression era. The federal government, with no interest in "ruffling" the laws of Jim Crow allowed the state governments to control New Deal relief funds without stipulations, resulting in much inconsistency in relief payments and continued racism against blacks. Particularly in the South, the relief funds provided to black sharecroppers and agricultural laborer were limited in order to appease white plantation owners who wanted to maintain their cheap farm labor (Katznelson 2005).

Thus, welfare, in its inception was wrought with racist and discriminatory practices that allowed welfare to benefit whites, but severely limited relief to blacks. As blacks were able to garner some welfare relief in the 1950s and 1960s, the discourse surrounding welfare changed. Initially, the welfare mother was the "worthy white widow," but the discourse quickly shifted to the "immoral Black welfare queen" (Roberts 1997: 207). As black women had more access to welfare, white politicians, representatives and whites in general framed black women's use of welfare, not as deserving, but instead rooted in black women's supposed poor family values and sexually licentious behavior; old notions in the construction of black female bodies. The

dominant discourse positioned black women as proverbial leaches that usurped the welfare systems by continuously having “illegitimate” children to collect welfare checks and avoid work. In the late 1950s, Senator Wilbur Jolly cited “welfare dependence,” illegitimate births, and “poverty” as a “Negro problem.” He believed that “Negro’s” and “‘sexually delinquent individuals’ were increasing” in society at a much higher rate than the “virtuous members of society” (Thomas 1998: 424). The virtuous members of society are synonymous with whites. Senator Jolly viewed women’s “unregulated sexuality” as the reason for their poverty.

In the same vein, Representative David Glass stated that black women “‘because of child welfare assistance [is] making it a business, in some cases having illegitimate children’” (Thomas 1998: 425). Representative Glass as well Senator Jolly proposed that black women be sterilized to prevent them from making a “profit” from welfare checks and to stop them and their “tainted offspring” from being a burden on tax payers (Thomas 1998).

According to Thomas (1998), much of these earlier 1950 arguments of black women’s “sexually delinquency,” reproduction for the sake of financial gain through welfare benefits, and the connection of black women’s “immorality” to poverty were the groundwork for much of the welfare reform in the 1990s. Much of the early arguments in the 1950s and ‘60s, describing black women’s “loose morals,” “sexual libidinous” and “animalistic” notions of black women as “brood sows” are quite prevalent, although not as explicit, in more recent documents on welfare reform proposals of state representatives and politicians. Black New Jersey Assembly member Wayne Bryant, a

staunch believer in fertility regulation, in 1992 claimed that these single black mothers had ““perverted morals,”” were living off those people who live in ““good suburbia,”” and that their illegitimate births were ““destroying the American way of life”” (Thomas 1998: 428). In 1992, Representative Susan Vergeront stated in personal communication with Thomas a similar sentiment:

I’m not saying it [illegitimacy] is only a Black problem. It’s just that there seems to be a culture of pregnancy in the Black community, I mean, they keep having children generation after generation. Then they collect welfare because they can’t afford to take care of all of them. But nine generations is enough. These women have to learn to control themselves, to make the same effort as everyone else. If they can’t do it, or won’t do it, then something has to be done (Thomas 1998: 429).

In these quotes by Vergeront and Bryant, contemporary politicians and representatives present black women as culturally deficient, lacking in sexual morality and self control, and as abject laziness. These descriptors are all deep frame notions. Black women were “scorned” (Thomas 1998) for using welfare assistance because of the belief that black women’s behavior was in opposition to the moral fiber of the proper, patriarchal, American, read white here, family. Based on these strong racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame beliefs, discriminatory welfare reform legislation was put in place. In the early 1990s several states, including New Jersey, Georgia, Arkansas, Illinois, Texas, Wisconsin, and Maryland, began placing family caps on AFDC recipients. These caps stipulated that women who had another child while receiving AFDC benefits would not receive additional funds for that child. This policy further pushed poor women and their children, predominantly black, into poverty with little means to take care of themselves, as contrary to popular sentiment, welfare funds only allow one to sustain a poverty level.

The long standing welfare debates and legislations, befuddled with raced, gendered, and classed discourses, focused predominantly on poor black women and in fact, had black women in mind in their conception (Roberts 1997). These reformative legislations culminated with the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act, a welfare reform act under President Clinton's administration, which ended Aid to Families with Dependent Children. This reformative legislation capped welfare at five years and stipulated that welfare recipients find employment within a two year period (Roberts 1997; Anderson and Taylor 2008). This construction of black women as the consummate welfare queen is firmly grounded and the deep frame of whites. As we shall see in Chapter V, the white male respondents in this study still have strong deep frame views of black woman as "generational" welfare queens. Despite the fact that the 1996 welfare reform, which has been in place now for over 10 years, has placed a lifetime limit of five years on welfare (now termed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) (Anderson and Taylor 2008) and has effectively "eliminated" generation to generation welfare subsistence.

Black Women and Femininity: Gender Ideology Revisited

Gender ideology in this section is revisited, as contemporary notions of black women and femininity are inextricably connected to the historical construction of black female bodies that proverbially places them outside of the bounds of hegemonic femininity. The construction of black women's femininity today is firmly grounded in how whites have historically constructed black women's beauty, in terms of hair texture, hair length, skin color and facial features. Black women furthest away from the white

ideal of beauty are those considered least feminine in a white constructed society. Black women's femininity is further defined, by the continued construction of black female bodies as the embodiment of unrequited strength, represented in the more contemporary controlling images of the long suffering strong black woman and the modern mammy caricature, a white construction of an acceptable, non-threatening form of black femininity. The contemporary construction of black women's femininity as "incomparable" to white beauty norms and as being "too strong" is yet another important segment of the deep frame that shapes how white men view, perceive, emote, and interact with black women. We will see in later chapters, several white male respondents expressing notions from the deep frame of black women as anti-feminine.

Complexity of Beauty Standards. Treated as a fundamental fact by whites as well as by some people of color is the normalization of white women as the beauty standard that white women as well as women of color must seek to achieve, and that all men, regardless of race should desire. As aforementioned, from a historical standpoint, the notion of white women as the standard symbol of beauty cannot exist without having a polar opposite to compare; black women. Collins (2000) states that "within the binary thinking that underpins intersecting oppressions, blue-eyed, blond, thin, white women could not be considered beautiful without the Other—Black women with African features of dark skin, broad noses, full lips, and kinky hair." Black women today continue to suffer gravely by this white imposed beauty standard, because in a society that objectifies women, women are judged and valued based on their physical



Figure 3. “Peaches the African American Woman Halloween Mask”

Notes: Product currently sold on Amazon. Notice the similarity between this image and the old Mammy image from the 1940s in Figure 2.

appearance (Collins 2000) and their ability to meet this white woman norm. The notion of black women as generally unattractive caricatures continues on fervently. Consider the image in figure 3. This image is of an item currently sold on Amamzon.com, tilted “Peaches the African American woman Halloween mask,” which is an image of an older, brown skin black woman with large features, wrinkled skin, a scarf wrapped around her hair, and a large, unbridled, servitor grin on her face. This is an image akin to the earlier image of the 1950s mammy caricature. If you look closer at the eyes, you can

see that a white person has the mask on. The presumably white sellers titled the mask the “African American woman” representing this image as the quintessential black woman; one who is unattractive, a happy servitor, and someone to be laughed at and commoditized.

Long standing negative images such as this one in figure 3 assert black women’s beauty as laughable and have black women feeling the strain of the incapacitating beauty standard. Thus, some black women (as well as Asian American women), in contemporary Times, more than ever before, have sought out plastic surgery, attempting to “refine” their noses among other procedures, in hopes of meeting the white ideal (Patton 2006), and thus achieving more societal acceptability in beauty and femininity. Black women are a marketed group for “beautifying” or “whitening” products to help them modify their aesthetic to emulate that of white women; this includes pressing combs, chemical hair straightening products, and bleaching creams. These products are appealing to many black women and have become normative “beautifying” regimens, because often those black women physically closest to the white norm are praised for their beauty within the black community and by the broader white society. In her work *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, hooks (1992) critically analyses how 1970s iconic black supermodel Iman was praised, in dominant white society, for her “Caucasian” features. The entrance of supermodel Naomi Campbell a decade later, although with darker brown skin, also sparked similar praise as Iman. Campbell, who dons lengthy straight and wavy wigs and weaves, was praised by fashionistas as the “black Bridget Bardot.” hooks (1992: 73) notes that the aesthetic that Naomi Campbell

represents and the praise she received for that aesthetic “suggest black women, while appealingly “different,” must resemble white women to be considered really beautiful” (P. 73).

This white constructed notion of black women’s beauty based on a white standard, as stated earlier, affects how blacks view other black’s attractiveness, specifically other black women’s attractiveness. A study by Mark E. Hill (2002), examines how black men and women, growing up in different periods, including a cohort of individuals “coming of age” during the black power and black is beautiful movements, rank the attractiveness of black women (and men) who range in skin color. Overwhelmingly, the study shows that black male and female perceivers ranked the black women with the lightest skin color as the most attractive on a “seven-point attractiveness scale,” whereas for black women with the darkest skin only four women were given a high attractiveness rating on the scale. Hill finds that these finding are not statistically different across, sex, age, education, or region, and thus black men and women had similar views about black women, skin color, and attractiveness. Additionally, those blacks “coming of age” during the black is beautiful movement were just as likely to have “color biases” as those not coming of age during that period of black empowerment (Hill 2002).

In focusing specifically on hair, black women’s hair textures continues to be a central component defining black women as outside of the norm of contemporary beauty standards. As aforementioned, a large market is targeted at black women for hair care products, weaves and wigs, with a designed purpose of making black women’s hair

mirror that of the hair texture norm, white women. Black women spend over \$200 million on these services at a rate that is three times more than white women's expenditures on hair care products (Patton 2006). Hair texture and length from historic to present times have long been a central component defining women's femininity and beauty. According to Collins (2005) hair texture, in terms of having "good" or "bad" hair is integral to "constructing hierarchies of femininity." Black women with unstraightened, short, kinky, or the derogatory "nappy" hair texture are viewed as having "bad" hair and as masculine, "as short, unstraightened hair was the "norm" for black men (Craig 2002). However, black women with naturally long, straight and/or wavy hair are viewed, (in the black community as well), as having "good" hair and more beautiful as they are closer capable of meeting hegemonic femininity and beauty standards that follow a white woman norm (Craig 2002).

As white women are the norm that black women are disciplined to acquiesce to in society, the invention of hair straightening techniques after World War I allowed black women to begin straightening their hair. By the time of the generation of black women living before the 1960s Civil Rights movement, hair straightening moved from a "popular practice" to an essentially mandatory practice or expectation for black women; even those black women with naturally straight or wavy hair textures straightened their hair (Craig 2002). The long standing expectation of black women meeting a white female norm through hair straightening, whether through pressing combs or chemical processes, has continued throughout today, with some exceptions. Particularly, the Black Power Movement of the 1960s and '70s marked a period of "black pride" and "black is

beautiful” sentiments, and with that ushered in new notions of black identity including a greater acceptance and projection of natural, kinky hair for black women and men.

However, the pervasiveness of the white standard existed *even* in the new found acceptance of natural black hair. By the early 1970s period of the Black Power Movement, “the natural had been transformed from a symbolic commentary on Eurocentric beauty standards to a new ‘look’ that had itself become the standard of beauty;” which is the shift from the natural to the Afro (Craig 2002: 109). The Afro style required the hair to be longer and to consist of a loose curly texture as opposed to a tight kinky texture. Maxine Craig (2002) provides a telling story during her young teen years, of the expectations of beauty and femininity for black women even during the black pride movement:

In 1971, I was a student in a junior high school in a predominantly black area of Brooklyn, New York. By then, most of the young female students had persuaded their mothers to let them stop straightening their hair. My schoolmate Yvonne had naturally short, tightly curled hair, the kind that the first critics of Eurocentric beauty standards wanted people to appreciate when they urged African Americans to see black as beautiful...The Afro look that was considered beautiful was a large round style that required longer hair. The only way for Yvonne to have one was to buy an Afro wig. Students travelled to the school by subway...and the ride home was often the most social, playful part of the day. One afternoon as we stood on the platform, a young man in our group snatched the wig off Yvonne’s head and hurled it onto the subway track. Yvonne stood stunned and humiliated, her short nappy hair exposed and ridiculed by one her African American classmates (P. 109).

As the example shows, short, naturally kinky hair has been the bane of many black women; a source of pain, frustration, and humiliation, even during the height of the black power movement’s strong expression of black as beautiful. Interesting here is that

even in this articulation of black as beautiful, black women were still held to meeting a particular standard of femininity and beauty that did not allow for the full embracement of blackness. In order to hold on to their femininity, a white normative femininity, black women, during this movement, still were disciplined against truly adapting their natural identities and embracing their natural hair completely, because of the white construction of unmanipulated naturally kinky or very tightly coiled hair as a site of masculinity. Black women who fully embraced such were seen as masculine, often within and outside of the black community. Thus, as the black power movement approached the early 1970s, the proclamation of natural hair for black women had shifted to a manipulated not so “kinky version.” Eventually, by the end of the black power movement most forms of natural hairstyles for black women and their embracement within the black community came to an end as well, as chemically processed hair, wigs, and weaves, all methods of conforming to hegemonic white femininity, were quickly re-adapted. However, these forms of adapting a white normative standard were never truly gone to begin with.

A fundamental affect of the normative hair texture and styles is the impact that such norm has on black women in the workplace. There have been several instances of black women being fired for wearing “ethnic” hairstyles. In the 1981 *Rogers v. American Airlines, Inc* case, Renee Rogers “charged” that she was discriminated against by American Airlines, because it disallowed workers to wear their hair in braids in certain job positions. The court ruled against Rogers finding that braids are a “cultural practice,” essentially a choice, and thus Rogers (and other black women in the future) “could have altered the all-braided hairstyle.” Therefore, American Airlines “was legally

authorized to force that choice upon her” (Caldwell 2000: 282). Similarly in 1987 a black woman, Cheryl Tatum, working for the Hyatt Regency was fired for wearing her hair in a “braided pageboy” and she had no protections under the law due to the prior 1981 precedent. In this case, Tatum’s firing by the Hyatt Regency was based on their policy against ““extreme and unusual hair styles”” (Caldwell 2000: 276). According to Tatum, the manager of the Hyatt could not believe she would wear her hair in such a style, stating (according to Tatum): “I can’t understand why you would want to wear your hair like that anyway. What would our guest think if we allowed you all to wear your hair like that” (Caldwell 2000: 284). In other examples, New York Federal Express and UPS fired black women from their positions for wearing dreads, an integral requirement of the fired black women’s Rastafarian religious beliefs (Patton 2006). The lack of protection black women have had under the law to wear hairstyles that are indicative of whom they are as black women, provides an unspoken assumption—that black women must acquiesce to an explicit occupation “hair professionalism” that implicitly applies a white woman normative standard.

A few aspects of black women’s beauty, for example “fuller lips,” “tan skin,” and fuller backsides that in contemporary time have been considered beautiful by the dominant white society. However, what is important here is that these aspects are not necessarily defined or accepted as truly beautiful, until whites, because of their power to define beauty standards and to control advertisements and other mediums that use “beauty” as imagery, define it as such. Yet this “redefining” of beauty standards most significantly relates to the enhancement of their own beauty as opposed to espousing

black women as beautiful. In this sense, whites have essentially commodified “otherness;” they have set the beauty standards that place black women outside of the boundaries, yet at the same time covet “aspects of otherized beauty” and “incorporat[e] Black beauty standards into their regime” (Patton 2006: 44). Through the appropriation and commodification of various components and features found more prevalently in black women, they can now be bottled up, sold, bought, and “eaten” by the dominant group, in this case white women, by means of tanning, lip enhancers, and “booty” enhancing jeans; yet never with fear of becoming the “other” or elevating the “others” beauty above their own. Thus, due to whites power to hegemonically define beauty, black women (and blacks in general), generally, must wait until whites deem certain aspects of their beauty acceptable before those aspects are acceptable in the dominant society and even acceptable among blacks themselves. Consider the process of full lips from historically representing a sure sign of unattractiveness, to now more presently symbolizing an acceptable, desirable, and even beautiful feature in the dominant society, as whites have commodified and appropriated full lips for themselves. In the following chapter, we will see how white male respondents in this study, viewing black women’s beauty through the lens of the deep frame, judge black women’s attractiveness against the white normative standard, in terms of their ability or inability to meet this standard.

Strong Black Woman. Notions of black “matriarchs” or strong black women and weak black men continue to persist in society today. Collins (2005) notes that just as in the 1960s, black women and black men are blamed for the various economic and family issues facing blacks today. Particularly, black problems are assumed and presented as

due to their “failure to achieve normal complementary gender roles adequately” or traditional white gender ideology, according to Collins (2005:183). Collins notes that society has shifted into a “new racism,” in which the media and public discourse present racism as being over, and proclaim that the problems facing the black community, in terms of disproportionate poverty, unemployment, and imprisonment, are essentially their own fault, and only their fault. Collins notes, as other critical theorists, that society today continues to operate in much the same way as the past, as continued practices of “racial-rule” and institutionalized racism persist.

Racialized images and messages in the mass media represent black women as too strong and black men as too weak. Presented through various mediums, the “unnatural” strength of black women is presented as hindering black men’s “natural” ability to lead in the black family. Many blacks have internalized this as the way to bring about positive change for the black community and thus, have encouraged black women to surrender their “assertiveness,” take a subordinate role to black men and let them lead (Collins 2005). This concept continues to devalue the strength that black women have shown in maintaining their families by working and being independent. Collins (2005: 178-179) states that the new racism “positions Black gender ideology,” conceptualized as strong black women and weak black men, “as the opposite of normal (White) gender ideology and represents the “negative,” non- white culture and values of blacks as the reason for their inability to assimilate to white society. The images of black femininity and masculinity are viewed by whites as deviant and in opposition to the norm. White gender ideology cannot exist without an antithesis, deviant black gender ideology.

However, the historic racialized construction of white gender ideology categorically excludes blacks from fulfilling these traditional white roles of masculinity and femininity. Blacks are told to adapt to normal (white) roles, as a way for social progress and black men and women are enticed to “blame each other” for the problems in their communities, while the ownership is taken off institutionalized racism and discrimination (Collins 2005).

Black women in contemporary society continue to be represented as overwhelmingly strong, as anti-traditional notions of femininity, and as problematical, emasculating partners for black men. The strong black woman representation, as with the matriarch myth, has been generally adopted by black women, as it seemingly provides a more positive portrayal. However, the strong black woman representation has its negative effects on black women’s lives, even as black women have been generally accepting of the representation. According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003: 18-19) in their book *Shifting*, black women, represented as strong, “unshakeable,” and invulnerable, are “told that they are tough, pushy, and in charge,” Jones and Shorter-Gooden state that this image makes black women someone to be “feared” as opposed to “someone to be loved.” The reality is that black women, based on their legacy, (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003) have had to be strong and have been and continue to be survivors. However, the embracement of such representations by others and by black women often results in detriment. According to Collins (2005) when black women take on the strong black woman persona it too often means putting up with physical and emotional abuse by black men and others and taking care of their family members and

children with little help. The strong black woman depiction, pervading the dominant discourses, denies black women's self, as they quickly learn that to be strong means to silence themselves, to hold in their emotions, deny their own personal needs, and essentially be impervious to suffering (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2008). Black women learn that they are expected to be strong black women, enduring it all, complaining none, all while maintaining a "stiff upper lip" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2008). This disempowering image, in turn affects the health of black women, in terms of depression, substance abuse, obesity, and even suicide. Yet, due to the pervading discourse of the strong black woman, the possibility for black women's depression or suicide is often denied to them (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003; Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2005).

The pervasive discourse of the strong black woman is rooted in raced, classed, and gendered oppression. The depiction of the strong, sturdy, "sub-human" black woman in the discourse is embedded in white's need and belief of black women's physiognomic design to serve and provide mental and physical labor, including reproductive labor, for an exploitative colonial system that economically, psychologically, and physically benefitted whites. Zora Neal Hurston (1937: 29) stated it plainly in her work, that black women have been constructed as the "de mule uh de world." Essentially black women are the women "who must labor for others above them in the social hierarchy" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2005: 105) and whose bodies, in mental and physical capacity, are designed and designated to do just that. For black women, the strong black woman construction makes their existence relevant in their ability to toil and muddle through hardships alone, without need for and undeserving of help. For

example, one southern public assistance field supervisor stated the following about black women, labor and welfare in the 1930's:

The number of Negro cases is few due to the unanimous feeling on the part of the staff and board that there are more work opportunities for Negro women and to their intense desire not to interfere with local labor conditions. The attitude that they have always gotten along, and that "all they'll do is have more children" is definite....There is hesitancy on the part of the lay boards to advance too rapidly over the thinking of their own communities, which see no reason why the employable Negro woman should not continue her usually sketchy seasonal labor or indefinite domestic service rather than receive a public assistance grant (Abramovitz 1996: 318-319).

In this quote, the operative phrase is that black women have always "gotten along," that without need for any type of assistance, black women have found a way to drudge through. The notion of black women drudging through, without assistance, or undeserving of assistance, is connected to the notion of black women's "place" as the proverbial long-suffering laborer, whether laboring in the fields or domesticating in the households of whites. This quote illuminates the construction of the strong black woman innately built for long-suffering, struggle, and service, for the socially dominant group in society, whites, as well as her own.

Essentially, the construction of black women as strong, too strong, and thus anti-feminine and in opposition to hegemonic femininity and traditional gendered ideology (Collins 2005) is a caricature construction that is firmly enmeshed in the dominant discourse, and ultimately the deep frame of whites (as well as blacks). Not to say that black women should embrace traditional general ideology, rooted in notions of a "passive" and submissive woman, whose sexuality is designated for service to men

(Collins 2005), which in itself is an oppressive gendered identity. Conversely, problematizing the strong black women myth shows how black women's femininity has been constructed in dyadic opposition to the heralded hegemonic femininity; middle class, heterosexual white women. The construction of the strong black woman myth, deeply embedded in the deep frame of whites, and blacks, presents black women as having strength that historically made them ideal for exploitative service and labor, and contemporarily makes them a hindrance to the "success" of the black family. In Chapter VI, as we will see later, several white male respondents define black women as complicit in their own "rejection" by white men and even by black men, claiming black women are too "strong" and "domineering."

New Mammies. As noted before, where the matriarch image is representative of the bad wife and the bad mother who dominates the family and emasculates the black man, the mammy image is the good black mother (Collins 2000), who knows her subordinated place in a white patriarchal society. Although the mammy image is rooted in the antebellum and the post antebellum south, contemporary society consists of new or contemporary images of black mammies that know their place and represent an acceptable black woman and worker in today's society. The modern mammy image, like the original mammy image, presents a black womanhood that distances the mammified black woman from the sexual aggressiveness of the black jezebel (Collins 2005). Collins notes that, unlike the enslaved black mammy, the post antebellum mammy working in the homes of whites, or the black jezebel, which are images representative of enslaved, poor or working class black women, the modern mammy is the "template" for the hard-

working middle class black woman. This new mammy does not work as a domestic laborer in white homes but instead works in middle class occupations. New mammies are expected to work hard on the job, often jobs that do not pay them equally or positions where they have to put forth double effort (Collins 2000) to get the same type of respect and promotions. The new mammy typically has no family life or if she does she is expected to place her job above her family and her personal well being. She is devoutly loyal to her job, her organization, and her white boss. Her personal needs are secondary to this commitment or nonexistent, and she is asexual. The projection of the new mammy is most commonly seen on contemporary television shows with black female characters and representative of mega talk show host Oprah Winfrey (Collins 2005). Collins provides the exemplar of Oprah Winfrey as a modern mammy noting that she often sends messages on her mass viewed talk show of taking personal responsibility for changing one's own life in order to deal with the social problems of the world. In this sense, modern mammies, like the old mammy caricature, can aid in passing on proper deference and adherence to dominant group that maintain black women's "place" as subordinate, and thus aid in their own oppression.

This new mammy is intricately interconnected with gender ideology in that this image, for those women who adhere to this image and for those that have this image projected upon them by the dominant in society, continues to place black women in abject opposition to hegemonic femininity. This is accomplished because the new mammy image projects the good, acceptable, middle-class black woman as the one who is the perpetual, "submissive" servant who serves the needs of her job, boss, and the

dominant groups, above her own. Her sexuality is mostly asexual, and she is not relationship worthy or has no time for a love life of her own because she is expected to provide a “lifetime of faithful services” to her career and her boss; as her needs are always secondary (Collins 2005). Middle-class black women, who do not play the role of modern mammy or who go too far outside the stipulated bounds of the new mammy, and forget their place, face direct consequences (Collins 2005). For middle-class black women to “move up” per se in society, the modern black mammy character of indelible service to job and deference to dominant ideology, is a template that middle-class black women need abide by. Consequently, the modern black mammy image places within the dominant discourse one of the few “respectable” personas, one that is white constructed and acceptable to whites, that middle-class black women can take on, because it maintains proper subordination, deference, and service, and places black women’s sexuality and femininity as non threatening.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I provide an overview and analysis of how influential whites, particularly white men, have played such a central and integral role in constructing a domain of knowledge about black female bodies, and have essentially constructed and defined what black female bodies are and what they are not. Influential white men have historically constructed black female bodies as licentious sexuality, animalistic, undeserving of protections, the opposite of “beauty,” too strong,” masculine, domineering, and emasculating. This historical construction of black female bodies produces two very important components: the construction of black women as anti-

women and as the opposite of femininity. The historical defining of black women as masculine and licentious was designed to place black women outside of the bounds of hegemonic white femininity. And furthermore, as O'Grady expresses eloquently, the historical construction even placed black women outside of the bounds of woman, as "woman" is white and what she had "better not be," is black.

This strong historical foundation defining black female bodies is the foundation for the contemporary construction, firmly rooted, although with some variation, in these earlier images and definitions of black women by Europeans as far back as the fifteenth century. Central here is that black women continue to be constructed as outside the bounds of hegemonic femininity and beauty, and thus socially constructed as no legitimate relationship partner for white men. This domain of knowledge of what black female bodies are and what they are not is firmly embedded in the deep frame, the "infrastructure of the brain," the common sense world view of white men (as well as some people of color). This frame acts as a tinted lens by which white men view, perceive, interpret, emote, and interact with black women. We will see in the subsequent chapters how the deep frame of white men today operates. In the following chapter, I analyze how the white male respondents in this study define physical and sexual attraction to black women, and how through the lens of the deep frame that black women are often defined by respondents "at best as less beautiful, and at worst, ugly" (Collins 2005:194) in comparison to white women.

CHAPTER IV

DISCOURSES OF COMPARISONS: PHYSICAL ATTRACTION AND MEETING THE NORMATIVE STANDARD

...Normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age. For the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced – or at least supplemented – by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogenous social body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank. In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity...it is easy to understand how the power of the norm function within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences (Foucault 1977:184).

Entrenched within the deep frame is the construction of whites and blacks as abject hierarchical polarities, with whites afforded positive imagery and blacks negative. Also embedded within the deep frame is the normalization of whiteness, or the white norm. Crenshaw (1995:115) states that the white norm is an “unspoken form as a statement of the positive social norm, legitimating the continuing domination of those who do not meet it.” Whiteness, as it functions to wield power and maintain domination, is made invisible and is deracialized because it has been solidly built into the definition of what normality is in society. Whites have essentially “coloniz[ed]” the definition of normal” (Haymes 1995a:111) and have explicated difference, or opposition to this norm, as blackness. As Foucault states in the quote above, normalization is an instrument of power and plays a role in classification and hierarchization. Thus, the normative standard of whiteness continually reinscribes white as the ideal entity, as innate

superiority, at the top of the hierarchy, and maintains white privileges and domination, yet in a more tacit fashion than in the Jim Crow era.

The social construction of whiteness as normality, as the obligatory standard, is central to how whites have framed society in racialized, gendered, and classed ways. The ways in which many whites see, understand, and analyze society and the people in it is rooted in an understanding and interpretation of society as defined by whites. Thus, white men viewing the world through the lens of the deep frame understand beauty, skin color, body features, facial features, and culture from a perspective that is white defined and that privileges what whites have characterized as the epitome of beauty, desirability, and rightness.

In this chapter, I analyze the dominant discourse of whiteness as normality that white male respondents expressed in this study. The white male respondents' viewing black women through the deep frame lens placed certain facial and body features as the most desirable attributes; however, these attributes often have a white norm. The white male respondents employed what I refer to as a discourse of comparisons. When sharing their thoughts on black women as attractive or as possible partners, they compared black women dyadically to the white normative standard, embedded in the deep frame, and judged black women's beauty based on their ability or inability to meet this standard. Those black women most capable of meeting the white norm—in body, facial features, skin color, hair and culture—were often considered the most desirable by respondents, whereas black women unable to meet these comparison standards were perceived as less desirable. Some respondents reprimanded black women to strive for this norm, while

certain others viewed black women as genetically incapable of meeting the white standard. The white norm was expressed explicitly by some respondents at times, such as white male respondents' expressing an interest in those black women who "act white" or "look white," whereas in other responses, whiteness as normality was unspoken or tacit; for example, black women's bodies or features were described as abnormal. In analyzing and interpreting the responses and in understanding the dyadic and hierarchical nature of how western thought has been constructed, it is readily clear that what goes unspoken, but what is normal, is whiteness.

In most occasions, when white male respondents engaged in a discourse of comparison, they used a white woman standard embedded in the deep frame. However, at times Latina and Asian American women were used to represent this norm as well, as these groups are seen as being closer to the white standard than blacks. As mentioned earlier, some Latinos/Latinas and Asian Americans are placed, by whites, above blacks and closer to whites along the raced, gendered, and classed white-to-black continuum. According to Bonilla-Silva (2004), certain Latina/Latinos and Asian Americans are afforded by whites an honorary white status, as they are seen as having certain attributes that fall in line with white norms. However, this classification is tenuous and always subject to change. An important point to note here is that, in the deep frame, not only is the knowledge domain of whites superior to black women and blacks in general, but also other racial groups of color, including Latina/Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, are superior to blacks, as blacks are placed the furthest from the white ideal.

ATTRACTION TO BLACK WOMEN WITH “WHITE TRAITS”

Around 54% of white male respondents described themselves as physically attracted to black women, while 46% described themselves as either rarely attracted to black women or not attracted to black women at all. Those respondents that described themselves as rarely attracted or having no physical attraction to black women were most likely to define that lack of attraction to black women in the following language: “coarse” or “nappy” hair; “black” facial features, “big lips” and “wide noses”; dark skin; and “larger” and “disproportionate” body shapes. Those respondents that described themselves as attracted to black women stated that they were most attracted to black women’s eyes, lips, and skin tone. However, some of the respondents that described themselves as attracted to black women stated that they were not attracted to black women with kinky hair, wide noses, and large body shapes, and some had preferences for black women with light skin and straight hair. While there were some respondents that attempted to use “colorblind” language in describing physical attraction to black women, stating they found the same things physically attractive in black women as they did in white women and/or that they “see no color” when it comes to physical attraction or interest in women, it is important to critically analyze this. As the research discussed earlier shows, black women are overwhelmingly excluded as dating and marriage options by white men; thus, despite the profession by some white men of “colorblindness,” the material reality shows that something else is in play.

As mentioned above, those respondents that found black women unattractive or that were rarely attracted to black women, and even some of those that found black

women attractive, rooted that lack of attraction in those traits defined as “black” traits: dark skin, hair texture, and facial features. In contrast, some respondents described black women with more “white” facial features and hair as the only attractive black women, thus invoking a discourse of comparison in which whiteness is the standard black women’s beauty is judged against. Gilbert, a lower middle class Coloradoan in his 30s, described himself as attracted to black women, but a particular type: “I am attracted to black women that fit my ideal petite body type, and ones who are lighter skinned.” His expression of being attracted to black women who are of a lighter skin color elicits the long-heralded notion that black is only beautiful when it is synonymous with a multiracial identity. Dillon, an upper middle class Texan over 50, was more direct, stating, “I do find some black [women] attractive, but they tend to have more white physical features and are polished (good grooming, dress, athletic, professional). Alicia Keys comes to mind.” Dillon specifically stated that possession of “white” features are what he believes make black women attractive, and like many other respondents, offered Alicia Keys, who is multiracial black and white, as the ideal black woman. Ross, a middle class white male in his 40s, also from Texas, offered a similar standard of attraction for black women.

This respondent also viewed black women who have “white” physical traits as the only black women he is attracted to. His response echoes a long historical message that only black women who look like “white women” can truly be attractive. Thus, he causally made the connection between whiteness and beauty. Furthermore, he extended this to make a causal connection between whiteness and intelligence. Despite admitting

to having no close black female friends and few personal interactions with black women, outside of work and church acquaintances, he places whites and Asian Americans as naturally more intelligent than blacks, with his assumption that this intelligence is not as prevalent in blacks.

Sexual attraction for me is a combination of physical and personal attributes. If I find a "black" woman attractive, it is because their hair type and facial features are more representative of the [C]aucasian race. If that aspect is attractive, then their speech and intelligence level would have to be more representative of that found more prevalent in other races (such as [C]aucasian or [A]sian - i.e.: anthropological mongoloids.

These respondents espoused white traits in black women as more beautiful, thus alluding to a multiracial black woman as the most desirable. Indeed, there has been a long history of presenting black women with a multiracial background of white ancestry, formerly referred to as the derogatory term mulatto, as the ideal and attractive black women. During slavery, mulattos and quadroons, the products of nonconsensual sexual relations between enslaved black women and white slave owners (as well as overseers), were heavily sought after and paid handsomely for by white slave masters. According to one slave trader, he would not sell a mulatto child while she was young because he believed she could be of much greater worth to him when older, as a “fancy piece”: “She was a beauty – a picture – a doll – one of the regular bloods – none of your thick-lipped, bullet-headed, cotton-picking niggers...” (Northup1855:87). Although both mulattoes and all black women were enslaved and divested of rights, by this quote it is clear that there was a distinction between the “beauty” and “worth” of blacks who were imbued

with a white racial background versus the perceived “ugliness” of those blacks who were not.

Maxine Leeds Craig (2002) in her work *Ain't I A Beauty Queen: Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* traces the long historical trend of offering multiracial women up as the “ideal type” black women. For example, in the early 1900s, the ideal black woman was of Egyptian type. According to the *New York Age*, this woman was defined as having:

A well balanced and symmetrical head, full slender neck, the features clear cut, with the appearance of being chiseled rather than cast;...a fine Negro nose with a trace of the Egyptian and a slight aquiline curve; the mouth fairly small but well proportioned and a slightly pointed, round, firm chin...the marvelously fine curving eyelash of which the Negro race can be justly proud (Pp.49-50).

Craig (2002) notes that this “ideal” black woman in the description above is of “mixed racial heritage” and although hair type and skin color were not explicitly stated, the desire for long hair and light skin was “so firmly established” that it “went without saying.” But most important here is that this quote is representative of the continuous use of multi-racial, or mulatto, women as the “ideal representative” of the entire black race. This is an aesthetic that is unachievable for most black women yet is supposed to be a symbol of her “finest expression” (Craig 2002), that of a white racial heritage.

Davis, a lower middle class white male from Idaho and in his 20s, extended this notion of the multi-racial black woman. He described what he believes an attractive black woman to be:

There are some black women who are attractive. And they aren't full black. The only black women I find attractive are a mix of black and [E]uropean, black and [L]atino, or black and [A]sian. They end up with the tan complexion, and hair that doesn't look frizzled or like a brillo pad.

Davis cited the racial hierarchy in his comments, essentially classifying only mixed-race black women as attractive: first Europeans, then Latinos, and then Asian Americans.

Another respondent, Brock, a lower middle class Nebraskan in his 30s, also categorized mixing with other racial groups, besides whites, as ideal. This respondent, who claimed to have many personal interactions with black women, including sexual relationships, stated that “attractive black women tend to be slender with straighter hair and [A]sian-esque features...” For both Davis and Brock, “blackness” must always be “watered down” with other racial groups in order for a black woman to be considered remotely attractive. Consider here the deep frame, by which the white normative standard is so firmly entrenched, as black women are only beautiful based on their ability to look like “brown white women” or to appear the least black as possible, as black women have been placed on the bottom of the race and gender hierarchy in the deep frame.

BLACK WOMEN WITH “BLACK FEATURES”

Whites have constructed black features, including body shape, facial features, and hair, as the dyadic opposite of white features, a central component of the deep frame. Dating back to early European travelers in various African nations, whites have defined what they perceived as black features in negative terms. Because femininity is heavily rooted in women’s physical body, what is defined as a beautiful body becomes the mark of femininity, and what is defined as a beautiful body is rooted in a white

woman norm (Collins 2005). The construction of black or too-black features as being “ugly” most significantly affects black women because being black, or as close to the spectrum of (white-defined) blackness as possible, effectively locks black women outside of the definition of beauty, and thus outside of the confines of hegemonic femininity. This construction of beauty as discussed in Chapter III is firmly grounded in the racialized and gendered deep frame that whites (and many people of color) see, understand, and make interpretations from. Despite what many may perceive as changes in the overarching notions of beauty, meaning the acceptance of some black women, such as Beyonce, as beauty icons, these changes are often surface level and have not uprooted the deep notions of black beauty as “at best less beautiful and at worst, ugly” (Collins 2005) in the minds of whites (and some people of color). Thus, when asked about physical and sexual attraction to black women, the deep frame that places the “blackness” or the “too much blackness” of black women outside of hegemonic beauty and femininity surfaced for white male respondents. Consider Bob, a middle class respondent from Missouri over the age of 50. He stated:

I think black women's features are too extreme; they are too dark, and they usually are much too large for my tastes. The black women I have know[n] are very aggressive and have terrible attitudes...The only black women I have found even marginally attractive are smaller, lighter-skinned black women with nice rear ends. ala Beyonce.

In contrast, Bob stated that he is most attracted to white women: “I think that white women’s features are softer, yet more defined. I just think they are more attractive than women of other races.” He described white women as “intelligent, beautiful and confident,” in contrast to black women; in fact, in several portions of his questionnaire,

he described black women as “very fat” and “very black” and attributed a host of other negative characterizations, such as “bad attitude,” despite admittedly having very limited personal interactions and experiences with black women.

James, an older, college-educated respondent from Arkansas, who has had some personal experiences with black women, echoed Bob. When asked about his attraction to black women, he stated the following: “Do not find attractive – facial features, hair, skin. Occasionally a black woman whose black features are less prominent will be attractive, but rarely. Most of the black women I find attractive...are of mixed ethnicity and appear more white than black.” For James, as with many white male respondents, the less “black” black women look, the more attractive they become, in his mind. Levi, a white male in his 20s from Tennessee explained what he finds unattractive about black women:

...I'm not attracted to dark skin. Not attracted to the stereotypical hair or sometimes greasy looking hair and skin that i have seen enough on black women to associate with them. i wouldnt like it on other races either, but i tend not to notice it on them. some ethnic hairstyles i do not find flattering. but to each their own maybe some other guy finds it attractive.

Levi, who has had rare personal interactions with black women, expressed that he is also not attracted to features associated with blackness, including skin color and hair. He noted that he tends to specifically notice this on black women and not other racial groups, which is not necessarily surprising as there tends to be a preoccupation among whites with blacks, more so than with other racial and ethnic groups. Throughout his questionnaire, he noted that friends and family would not be “thrilled” with him dating black women and that he feels social pressure from friends to not date black women,

stating that this is not out of hate on his friends' behalf but "mostly out of fear of being a pariah in the white community..." When asked what would need to change for more white men to marry black women, he stated, "Social pressure can dissipate, but being attracted to black women can't change." Thus, he seems to provide as a fact that although social pressure from friends and family may quell down, white men will generally never be attracted to black women, particularly black women with black traits. The important thing to realize here is that often what white men view as attractive and unattractive is rooted in how society has been socially constructed in racialized, gendered, and classed terms, a construction that privileges whites and makes it seem generally natural that blackness, such as black facial features, dark skin, or hair texture, is unattractive.

Another respondent, Dan, an older, working-class male from the Midwest plainly articulated one of the most racialized and gendered components of the construction of black female bodies when he expressed, "I tend to read African features as somewhat masculine. The 'blacker' the person, the less femininity I tend to see." Whereas the other respondents alluded to black or too-black features as being a negative "extreme" that incites unattractiveness, Dan articulated that perceived unattractiveness as a sign of masculinity. Dan's assertion of black features on black women as masculine is rooted in the deeply racialized and gendered framing of society in which embodied in the construction of the black female body is the firm denial of black women from hegemonic femininity, beauty, and womanhood. As is evident in Dan's quote, he

operates out of the dominant discourse relevant to the overarching deep frame that inscribes black women as masculinized.

A recent study by Goff, Thomas, and Jackson (2008) that analyzes how personal perception of attractiveness is affected by intersecting gender and racial identities finds expansive current research that shows how whites (and other racial groups) connect blackness with masculinity. In this study, a large sample of college students, predominantly white (82%) and male (72%), were shown several head shots of black women, black men, white women, and white men for a period of five seconds and then asked to judge the pictures in terms of perceived masculinity, femininity, and attractiveness, among other factors. Important findings of the study are that the predominantly white participants perceived black faces as more masculine than white faces, that participants had greater accuracy in guessing the gender of black men as opposed to black women, and white women as opposed to black women, and that participants perceived black men as slightly more attractive than white men and white women as more attractive than black women. Thus, the participants' perceived of black women (in the pictures) as being men and of black women as less attractive than both black men and white women. The authors show the historical construction of blackness as masculine, as both black men and women were perceived as more masculine than white women and men, and black women were rated as "less attractive" based on their perceived masculinity according to the respondents. This study shows how deeply the notion of black women as masculine is 'rooted in the racialized and gendered deep frame that many whites see from. According to Lakoff (2006a), the frame is often used

unconsciously, without people knowing it. The notion of blackness (black woman) as masculine is deeply ingrained in the white mind, via the deep frame; thus, for the respondent Dan, being “black” or the “blacker” one automatically activated his deep frame that tells him exactly what blackness is defined to be—masculine—irrespective of or respective to gender.

It is also important to note that the construction of black female bodies as the opposite of femininity, in the deep frame, was not just for the purposes of defining the black female body as masculine for the economic benefit for slavery, because her “strong” body could work the fields and bear children. Black female bodies were also constructed as the opposite of femininity so that black women would not be a legitimate source of competition for white women, because as masculine, a black woman is not a worthy and legitimate partner for a white man (or even a black man, for that matter). She can be desired behind closed doors by white men or experience rare circumstances of outward affection by white men, but in an open and legitimate sense, she is not an acknowledged body of competition to white women because she has been constructed as a body that does not compare.

The Black Sexual Body

Black women’s physical and sexual body parts, particularly the buttocks and vagina, were a subject of complex thoughts among white male participants and, as with facial features, a discourse of comparison in which a white standard was directly or indirectly espoused in white men’s thoughts on physical and sexual attraction to black women. White men’s discourse on black women’s buttocks represented the buttocks as

simultaneously a site of sexual/physical attraction and a site of condemnation. Drake, who is in his 20s and resides in Nevada, discussed his attraction for black women with a larger buttock:

I am sexually attracted to most all women, but black women have a certain 'exotic' look to them, and I like that. Specifically, I really love black women with bubble butts and nice legs, and who are fit.

This respondent, who was currently dating a black woman at the time of the study, described himself as mostly attracted to non-white women, stating that he is "...attracted to black and Latina women. They have beautiful skin and eyes. I also love that they have a generally fuller figure and more voluptuous. I like a nice bubble butt." Drake defined black women as "exotic," which may play a role in increasing or exciting his attraction level to black women, with black women's buttocks being the height of that perceived exoticness, as black women's "butts," historically, have been an integral component in defining black women as an "exotic," sexual body. Another respondent, Doug, a white male in his 20s who resides in Vermont, stated, "...I like big butts. In high school I read (and looked at) King magazine, which is like Maxim but for a black audience, and all the models have really big butts."

Black women's butts have long been a "sign" of white-defined black sexuality, with the "protruding" black butt representing "primitive," "raw," "uncivilized" and "heightened" sexuality (Collins 2005; hooks 1992), one that was historically denigrated and pathologized. In today's commodity culture, the black butt has been re-commoditized and is now popularized and more acceptable in mainstream white society. White men in contemporary times can now more openly express their desire for full,

black butts, and those white women (as well as women of other racial and ethnic groups) who do not possess a full behind can now attempt to recreate or emulate black women's butts through special clothing, fat injections, and other types of "booty-enhancing" techniques. Clothing companies financially capitalize on this new desire for the protruding black butt. Victoria Secret's creation of "uplift" jeans, which include a "built-in back panel" that "lifts" the buttocks up "from the inside, yet is completely invisible from the outside" (Victoria's Secret 2008: 28) is an example of this economic end. Thus, black women's butts have entered mainstream white society as more acceptable, have been appropriated by whites as a symbol of "beauty," and represent (as in the past) an economically rewarding commodity, one that white women and white men can now openly claim as desirable.

Nonetheless, black women's butts being considered desirable come with exceptions and stipulations, as so defined by whites, as we shall see with the respondents of this study. Not all white men have accepted the beauty of the black butt; for some it is too visible a sign or a reminder of blackness. Additionally, there are stipulations for black women's butts. In order to be acceptable, the butt must be white-defined proportional; if not, it can be considered pathological, as it was during the days of Saartjie Baartman. Consider Morris, a middle class male in his 40s who resides in New Jersey; he stated, "Black women tend to have larger hips and butts, which is often a turn-off for me. I like a girl's ass but not a big one. Sorry. I know lots of guys do." While Morris was considerably tame in his response, others were not. Jean, a college-educated respondent in his 40s residing in Delaware, described black women's butts as "[h]uge,

sloppy asses.” Another respondent, 20-year-old Quincy, an Ohioan, described his aversion to black women’s butts in this way: “Ghetto booty, no thank you.”

Several white males expressed similar views by characterizing black women’s butt’s, “curves,” and bodies as being out of proportion and indicating that they find black women with “disproportionate” butts and shapes unattractive. Raymond, a 40-year-old respondent from Louisiana, stated that “[s]ome black women have excellent figures that are well proportioned, but not most.” Jay, a North Carolinian in his 20s, expressed that he finds “...most things about black women attractive, except for...a disproportionate ‘rear end.’” Similarly, James, mentioned earlier in the section during the discussion of white traits, declared that what he finds unattractive about black women, along with facial features, hair and skin texture, is that black women’s “rear ends are too large and out of proportion.” Providing his take on a proportional buttocks and black women, Nelson, a middle class male in his 20s from Idaho, shared what he ideally looks for in women:

White in ethnicity, tan in complexion. Between 5'3 and 5'7 105 to 140 lbs. Hair color isn't really that important, although blonde is preferable. Breast and ass should be well proportioned to the rest of the body. Long hair is good. And blue or green or grey eyes.

When asked if he could find his ideal woman in black women, he stated:

...I have yet to meet a black woman who is well proportioned and has a good personality. And for the most part, they don't have blue green or grey eyes.

He later stated that “Beyonce has an ass that is well proportioned to the rest of her body.

Alicia Keys is very petite with gorgeous eyes. That is about as far as it goes with me being sexually attracted to black women.” Similarly, Wallace, another respondent from

Delaware, who is college educated, middle class and in his 40s, described himself as rarely attracted to black women, stating, “I think some normal weight black wom[e]n have nice above average breast and plump butts that [are] nice. Most black wom[e]n have fat butts and are ugly.”

Black women’s butts have been constructed as a site of sexual attraction, as noted earlier, because the protruding size emphasizes sexual licentiousness, yet at the same time a spectacle and pathology. Thus, while on the one hand several white males find the “black butt” as attractive, both physically and sexually, others see it as a pathologized and racialized spectacle. Consider, for example, the white males’ descriptors of black women’s butts as too “fat,” “sloppy,” “ghetto,” and disproportionate. The creation of the “disease” steatopygia was used historically by scientists, such as Cuvier, who were analyzing Saartjie Baartman’s, and other African women’s, body to describe the “unnatural,” “protrusion” and “disproportionate” shape of the buttocks as pathological, primitive, and sexually deviant, as “female sexuality is tied to the image of the buttocks” (Gilman 1985). In this same vein today, the notation of white male respondents of black women’s butts as disproportionate has a direct historical connection to the construction of black women’s butts as the bane of pathology because it dare be different from what whites, historically and in contemporary times, define as normal and proportionate, with proportionate having a built-in white normative standard.

Likewise, when black women’s genitalia was mentioned by white male respondents, it was most always described as appearing unnatural, implicating black

women's vaginas as deformed, while also explicating that what is natural is the way in which white women's genitalia appear. Zack, who is in 20s and resides in the state of Nebraska, stated that he is not sexually attracted to a "[p]ink vagina but dark skin around." Consider also Walter, a Coloradoan in his 30s, who provided a similar discourse: "[I] think their vagina is just not right looking, the black lips and the pink inside is just a total turn off." Walter expressed not only his lack of attraction to black women's vaginas but also the notion that the vagina of black women is "just not right looking," essentially implying that the genitalia of black women has some sort of defect or abnormality. Extending this thought, Bob, a respondent mentioned earlier who expressed an aversion to black women and described them as "very fat" and "very black," stated, "...I do not like to see black women naked because of their dark breast[s] and the black vagina area looks disgusting." Here again, black women's sexual body parts are described as a site of repulsiveness, rooted in the notion of their perceived deformity.

As with the buttocks, black women's vaginas have long been a site of pathology, from a historical perspective, and along with the buttocks, have been used to oppressively demark black women as primitive and as "evidence" to purport, as truth, black women as innately inferior to whites. For example, the "Hottentot Apron" of Saartjie Baartman, which was a "hypertrophy" of the labia, caused by "manipulation of the genitalia," was "diagnosed" by early European scientists of the 1800s as a symbol of primitiveness and disease (Gilman 1985). In the same vein of pathologizing black women through the genitalia, Edward Turnipseed in 1868 made the argument that the

black woman's hymen "is not in the entrance to the vagina, as in the white woman, but from one-and-a-half to two inches from its entrance in the interior." Due to this believed "anatomical mark" of difference, Turnipseed deduced that "this may be one of the anatomical marks of the non-unity of the races" (Gilman 1985: 89), essentially showing that black women are not even the same species as whites. Although the demarcation of difference and pathology regarding black women's genitalia may have changed over time from shape and formation in the 1800s to "color scheme," it remains the same that black women's vaginas are constructed dyadically to the genitalia of whites. Thus, the deep frame that white men use to view black women's bodies consistently and continually frames most anything akin to blackness as deformity and pathology.

OPPOSITIONAL DISCOURSE

In most instances, when a discourse of comparison was used by white male respondents, white women were the norm, or the standard, that black women were compared and judged against—their ability, or in most instances their inability, to meet this standard. In rarer circumstances, when a discourse of comparison was used by white males, black women were the standard, not white women, nor the achievement of a particular aesthetic more akin to white women, such as fair skin, straight hair and aquiline features. Those respondents who engaged this oppositional discourse throughout the entirety of their questionnaire were more likely to have long-term dating relationships with black women, many personal interactions with black women, and to choose black women or Latina women as the women they are most attracted to. For example, Reginald, a North Carolinian in his 20s, stated the following:

Some things about trying to fit in to the "mold". I find that a black woman that accepts her beauty as a black woman, embracing her skin, hair, and form, is much more attractive than a black woman that tries to be a mass produced [B]eyonce. Women in the mainstream that are more appealing to me are singers [E]rykah badu and [I]ndia [A]rie, not the [B]eyonce prototypes. Black woman that learn to work with the incredible tools they have are much more attractive.

He went on to state, when asked about his physical attraction to black women:

...body shape, skin tone, physical strength and beauty. [T]hey project beauty and strength more than white women, whom [I] feel, project more indecisiveness and immaturity with decisions.

Reginald, who described himself as most attracted to Latina women and who had been dating a black woman for the last three years, said that he finds black women and the various attributes of black women more attractive than white women. For most other white male respondents, black women who were considered beautiful (and the only black women a few respondents found even “remotely attractive”) were the well-known singers Beyonce and Alicia Keys. Both Beyonce and Alicia Keys possess a white normative aesthetic; Beyonce has a light brown complexion and wears her hair long, straightened and dark blonde, while Alicia Keys, who is multi-racial with a white mother and black father, boasts the aesthetics of fair skin, long, naturally wavy hair, and aquiline features. Beyonce and Alicia Keys are placed in the mainstream media as two of the few representatives of “black beauty,” although they represent more of a multi-racial beauty, and one that black women should strive for. Reginald commented that he recognizes this particular “prototype” presented often in the mainstream media, that of black women who are more capable of meeting a white norm, yet in contrast to most other respondents, he appreciates black women who embrace their natural beauty and who do

not manipulate it to appease white ideals. Similarly, Luke, a lower middle class Tennessean in his 30s, shared his views on black women's beauty. When asked if he could find his ideal woman in black women, he stated:

Absolutely. African traits are some of the "best" in my book. I like black women, mixed heritage or not, who prefer locks, braids, or short hair to artificially straight hair. Also, full lips and dark skin are blessings to be proud of. I have to be honest here and say that women of African ancestry are often not lacking in the hips and "booty" either as many from other background sometimes are a bit....

When asked about what he finds physically attractive about black women, he said:

Do not: Like unnaturally straitened hair.... Do: Like very dark skin. Like kinky hair. LOVE locks on black women. Love African features such as full lips, strong frame, and beautiful dark eyes that pierce the soul.

Luke, who also described Latina women as the women he is most attracted to, stated that he has had many personal interactions with black women, including having several black female friends and dating two black women. He, too, said that he views black women's natural beauty as preferable to manufactured beauty that meets the normative societal standard. He noted that black women should be proud of their natural features, commenting later in his questionnaire that black women should love themselves more. Unfortunately, accepting black beauty, for black women, is a difficult feat in a society subsumed by European beauty standards.

It is important to make a critical note here, however. Although only a small number of respondents considered black features, hair textures and styles as the most beautiful, this could be another form of exotification. In this sense, black women may only be beautiful in terms of how "different" or "ethnic" they appear and the "exotic"

contrast that they can provide to whiteness. However, by analyzing the entirety of these respondents' questionnaires, it is hard to decipher if this was the case, as both Reginald and Luke do describe themselves as dating black women, being open to marrying black women, and surmising that it is likely that they will marry a black woman or a woman with "African ancestry" at some point in their lives.

Outside of providing an oppositional discourse of comparison, there were also a few respondents that engaged impartial language throughout the entirety of their questionnaire and seemed to be genuinely open to black women and women of all racial backgrounds and did not uphold any particular standard of beauty, whether European or black. Larry, a working class white male in his 20s from Oklahoma, responded this way:

Black wom[e]n are unique in the fact that they are black women, but human is human. Attractiveness for me is not about race, but it is about personality and values. Be proud to be a black woman, but don't think that it makes you more or less attractive, to some it may be this way but to some it is not this way.

Larry stated that, although he had rare interactions with blacks growing up and lived in neighborhoods with only a few black families, he has had many personal interactions with black women since adulthood and has dated one black woman, despite his family's disapproval of the relationship. In terms of the interracial relationship he was in, he shared that his "...family is mostly racist, so sadly it was not taken well, but I let them know quick they were going to have to accept it." He noted "less racism" as one of the factors needing to change in order for more white men and black women to marry.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the primary focus was on analyzing, interpreting, and problematizing white male respondents' physical and sexual attraction to black women. In part, the analysis shows the deep frame or tinted lens by which many white male respondents view black women's bodies. For many of the respondents, it is simply common sense, or fact, that white women are more attractive than black women, that straight hair is better than "kinky" hair, that light or white skin is preferable to dark, that aquiline features are preferable to full, flat or wide features, and that black butts and body shapes are disproportionate. This chapter also shows the complexity of the beauty standard. In contemporary society, fuller lips and fuller behinds are now more acceptable, and, in some instances, are considered beautiful. Despite this complexity, whites, through appropriation and commodification, can control which features of the "other" will be considered beautiful and more acceptable, yet never with fear that it will elevate the black woman's beauty above their own. Of central importance is that the data in this chapter shows that the old deep frame notions of black women, rooted in the observations and interpretations of early European travelers, scientists, and writers, are still firmly rooted in the deep frame or commonsense world view of white men today. Although a few respondents expressed an attraction to black women who were not "brown skinned white women" more capable of meeting the white normative standard, this is rare, not just among white men, but also among black men, as the integral power of the deep frame is that it disciplines thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and behaviors and thus disciplines what men and women define as beautiful. In the next chapter, I

discuss the delineation by white male respondents between two “different classes” of black women: those that embrace white culture and whiteness as the ideal entity and those that do not. Respondents ascribe a bevy of negative and deep frame attributes to black women who do not embrace white culture, and later chapters will show how this ascription of deep frame attributes to black women results in many of the white male respondents presenting black women as unwanted bodies.

CHAPTER V

“TWO VERY DIFFERENT CLASSES OF BLACK WOMEN”: RACE, GENDER, CLASS, AND CULTURE

As long as the only standards of cultural acceptability continue to be those models of European heritage and upper-class white Americans, visible racial/ethnic groups will always be seen as inferior unless they adopt the cultural ways thought to be better. Black Americans as a group cannot claim parity, even relative parity as long as their legacy is an African past and their adaptational reality is viewed as the lower-class, urban ghetto. The popular notion of ‘cultural deprivation’ as a description of black...children attests to a wholesale disregard of...black life and culture. Individual blacks...can escape only through the semipermeable societal membranes that Dubois referred to as ‘the Veil’ but in doing so they must distance themselves from Blacks...as a group both psychologically and culturally.... (Jones and Carter 1996: 17-18).

By having control over hegemonic edifices in society rooted in European imperialism, whites have monopolized culture and class and essentially controlled and defined hegemonic notions of culture within society. White-defined culture has been structured as having a direct connection to and being directly indicative of race, gender, and class. Thus, within the construction of culture is a notion of high and low, acceptable and unacceptable culture, which has direct implications on race, gender, and class politics. As whites have the power to predominantly control and influence the meaning systems, what is known as knowledge in society, white cultural ideas and values are neutralized and normalized in society. McLaren (1995) notes that white culture’s “most formidable attribute is its ability to mask itself as a category,” thereby whites may think of ethnic European groups, such as Italians, before “they think of their whiteness.”

Central to the construction of white culture is the fact that it is naturalized as a “cultural marker against which otherness is defined” and the culture of whiteness’ very existence hinges on what it is not. The power behind the “supposed” neutrality of white culture allows the exotification (McLaren 1995), commodification, and defamation of the “other” as the norm in white culture, which explicates difference and hierarchy.

McLaren (1995) notes, integrally, that whiteness is the “invisible norm for how the dominant culture measures its own worth and civility.” Essentially, dominant culture is based on a white norm and, furthermore, what are defined as acceptable and ideal dominant cultural attributes are those believed to be “expressed” and “fulfilled” by whites. These cultural characteristics generally ascribed to whites include mastery of “Standard English,” the use of “proper” grammar, responsibility, respectability, work ethic, drive, studiousness, the delay of gratification (at least publicly), desire for education, and strong family values, among others. Important in the construction of white culture is the actuality that it is rooted in notions of whites as objective, “rational,” “ordered,” and “civilized,” which is reliant upon notions of black culture as emotion, “irrationality,” “disorder,” and “incivility” (Haymes 1995b). Additionally, those aforementioned characteristics attributed to white culture, such as work ethic, studiousness, and drive, are not ascribed to blacks. The culture of blacks and the culture projected on them by whites are seen as deviant and resistant to the norm. As the opening quote by Jones and Carter expresses, an African past and a present black culture constructed as “lower-class,” inferior, and deprived will never be capable of reaching parity when the constructed norm for culture is rooted in a European ideal. When aspects

of black culture are deemed acceptable, it is often done so because it has been adopted by those that have the power to influence hegemonic ideas, whites. Additionally, the adoption of black cultural aspects by whites often hinge on exotification and commodification.

With the denigration of black culture, blacks learn (and are told) very quickly that they must adapt to the culture of the dominant group, and to successfully do that, they must distance themselves from blacks. Historically, it was widely believed that the nature of blacks made them inferior, and thus influential figures such as Jefferson viewed blacks as unassimilatable. In contemporary times, the issues related to black communities, such as continued poverty, are blamed on an “inadequate” black culture, with the underlying notion that if blacks only assimilated to the “proper” (white) cultural values and ideals, then all their “problems” would go away. This notion of embracing proper cultural values is racialized, gendered, and classed, as proper cultural values are deemed the adoption of white culture, while black culture, specifically what whites have projected on black culture, becomes synonymous with lower class and inferiority.

Thus in this chapter, I analyze the racialized, gendered, and classed ways in which black female culture was discussed by the male respondents. “Cultural differences” was one of the central reasons listed by several white male respondents as to why they do not date black women. In particular, one male respondent articulated that there are “two very different classes of black women.” The white male respondents placed one “class” of black women as those who “positively” embrace “normal” culture and the other “class” of black women as those who are enmeshed in “black culture” and

all the perceived negativity that comes along with that cultural choice. Black women were viewed as overwhelmingly representing the latter. Central to this discourse on black women's cultural attributes was the use of narrative, complete with heroes, victims, and villains, by white male respondents to support their discourse. These narrative stories are broader extensions of the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame.

BLACK CULTURE AND THE PUSH FOR WHITE ASSIMILATION

When respondents discussed “black culture” and “behavior” in their questionnaire, it was often expressed in a totalizing fashion as problematic, with many white male respondents distinguishing between black culture and normal behavior or a specifically stated “white” or “European” culture. Important here is that black culture, in most all instances when discussed by respondents, was synonymous with negativity. For example, consider James, a respondent mentioned in Chapter V, who is over 50. He grew up in what he described as a very racist environment, stating that as a child he was “taught that blacks were terrible, nasty people that whites should not associate with at all.” He now spends time working with black women in church and work settings; he shared the following thoughts on black women:

The black women I have known, mostly in church and work settings, have generally been well educated, middle class, family oriented people. I have not found their personalities to be significantly different from white or other women I have known. They have all been fine individuals I have been glad to have as friends....I think the black women I have known may not be representative of black women as a whole, but that is just an opinion.

James seems to provide a positive assertion of black women who are educated and family oriented, traits in this society that are generally associated with whites and white culture, as he asserts that these black women seem no different from the white women he knows. However, despite the fact that the majority of his personal experiences with black women have been through attending church with black women and their families and teaching at a school with several black women, he posited this “positive” assertion of black women by surmising that the black women he knows that have attributes no different from the white women he knows are possibly not representative of most black women. Later in his questionnaire, he responded to why he would not marry a black woman, stating:

If I marry a woman I want to be part of her family, interact with family members closely. I would not want to do this with a black family. [I]t would also cause great problems with my family (not my children). There are many areas in which I am pleased to interact with persons of any ethnicity, but marriage is not one of them. I don't like many aspects of black culture, music, family structure, etc. Not necessarily wrong, just not for me. Some aspects of black culture are inferior.

In this statement, James makes it clear that he does not want to be a part of a black woman's family and friends, and he even says in another section of his questionnaire that “most white men” would agree with him on this. He connects this aversion to marriage and family with black women to black culture. For him, black culture is inferior; despite the fact that most of his personal experience with black women has been with those black women who he deems as similar to white women; he totalizes black culture as negative and inferior. Specifically noting family structure as an aspect of black culture that he does not like he views the black family structure through the lens of the

deep frame, in which families that are not patriarchal and nuclear in form are seen as problematic and pathological, and are often deemed as the root of social and economic problems.

When asked about what would need to change for more white men to marry black women, James provided a classed image of black women, which he believes affects how black women are viewed as a marriage partner.

Well black women aren't gonna get any more attractive than they are now, physically. White men's attitudes toward black women would have to change. Also, the general image of a black woman as a baby machine, on welfare, poor, uneducated, whether truth or perception, would have to change. [U]pward movement of blacks in general in terms of education and income will make a difference...This will likely lead to a slight increase in intermarriage. But I don't think it will ever be very high.

He declared it as fact that black women will not become more attractive, and earlier in his questionnaire he defined white women “as more physically attractive” than black women, claiming that both white and black men would agree with him on this. He also asserted that the general image of black women is problematic and would have to change for more white men to marry black women. This general image of black women that he provided is both negative and classed, with James presenting a quintessential image of black women as that of a black woman on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale. He does not necessarily purport this image to be representative of black women, noting that this image may be either “truth” or “perception.” However, important here is that despite the fact that the majority of the personal interactions he has had with black women are with those in the middle class who are educated, the general image of black women that comes to mind is someone who is “a baby machine, on welfare, poor, [and] uneducated,”

An image of black women central to the white-constructed deep frame, and one that is rather pervasive in global mass media, as black women are often shown in limited roles.

“White Culture” as the Normative Standard

While expressing as problematic “black culture” and “behavior,” some respondents also implicitly and explicitly expressed “white culture” as the normative standard, the ruling standard that black women should strive for. Roger, a middle class male in his 20s from the state of Minnesota, expressed this when he described what he likes and surreptitiously what he does not like about black women’s behavior:

I like the ones who live in the suburbs. Who are respectful of other people and who can keep their voices at an average level. Who dress like normal people. Who can speak proper [E]nglish. Who doesn't swear every other word. Who doesn't shake their necks when they talk. Black women can be beautiful as long as they act like a normal human being. I like their hair, when they straighten it.

Later in the questionnaire, when sharing his final thoughts on black women, he stated:

To me, there are two very different classes of black women. One is the more ghetto, loud, obnoxious group and the other is the normal human being group. I am not racist. I don’t like people of any race that act like the stereotypical inner city black woman. There are plenty of black women out there who I would LOVE to have a relationship with. It has nothing to do with their race. It’s an attitude thing.

Roger, who has no close black female friends, has few personal interactions with black women, has never dated a black woman, and lived in a neighborhood with no black families, shared rather strong views of what he likes about black women. He equated proper English, no cursing, “normal” dress, “average level” voices, and being respectful with acting like a “normal human being.” It is explicitly clear that as Roger juxtaposed

the living spaces of black women living in the suburbs as representative of the normal human being class and black women living in the inner city as representative of the ghetto class, he was distinguishing between a “black class” and a “white class.” Stephen Haymes (1995b) in his work *Race, Culture, and the City* provides insight on Roger’s comment. In his work, he looks at what Foucault refers to as “heterotopias,” representative of heterogeneous and relational spaces that can be juxtaposed against one another, a term he uses to understand how some spaces get constructed as “normal” and “ordered” at the expense of constructing others as “abnormal” and “disordered.” In this sense, “urban” cities are racialized, where “blackness is the urban Other” representative of disorder, danger, and abnormality (P.4). Critically analyzing the work of Massey and Denton, Haymes (1995b:8) notes that the residential spaces of blacks are racialized, which “transpose[s] racial identity, or stereotypical black images of disruptive behavior, attitudes, and values, on to residential location.” In this “racialization of social space,” according to Susan Smith “residential location is taken as an index of the attitudes, values, behavioral inclinations, and social norms of the kinds of people who are assumed to live in particular ‘black’ or ‘white’ inner city or suburban neighborhoods” (Haymes 1995b:8). Thus, in Roger’s discourse, he racialized residential spaces, connecting positive attributes and norms to the spatial location of suburbia, a racialized space of “normal,” white values, while he placed “negative” attitudes and behavioral traits to the inner city, a racialized spatial location of abnormal and “disorderly” black cultural behavior. Thus, his discourse implies that if only black women changed their spatial location to a racialized white cultural area, then they would also take on the “proper”

white cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors. The articulation by Roger above and similarly by other whites reinforces the notion that the “problems experienced by black people are sharply bounded in space,” and “that when blacks live in the same geographical area they produce social pathologies.” This ignores white power structures that create such racially segregated spaces (Haymes 1995b: 143).

Another respondent, Gibson, who is in his 20s, is lower middle class, and resides in Wisconsin, also identified a “white culture” as the ideal entity, representative of certain positive traits. When responding to whether he believes he can find his ideal woman in black women, he stated:

No, they usually have body shapes that I don't like (usually their butts are too big), and don't value education as much as white and Asian women. I have known a few black women who were raised around whites, and they don't have these traits

Gibson has had very few personal interactions with black women and has lived in predominantly white neighborhoods. Although he states that he is rarely attracted to black women, he briefly dated a black woman, whom he described as being “...raised around whites, so she mainly acts white (except for the horse hair).” In Gibson’s discourse, he made a clear connection between a white cultural influence and the premium value placed on education. He later extended his comments by explicitly stating, “...The blacks I know who were raised as whites are doing much better than blacks who are living in the black culture.” Here, again, despite the fact that he described himself as having limited personal experiences with blacks and the fact that the black women he has known, including the woman he dated, had what he perceives as essentially white traits, the totalizing image he has of black women (and blacks in

general) is that of women who do not value education, an attribute he directly connects to a black culture that he tacitly implies as naturally defunct. Whereas in Roger's comment he attempted to make whiteness invisible as the positive ideal, by subsuming whiteness in the categories of "normal human behavior" and "suburbia," Gibson very explicitly identified being "raised around white," thus a "white culture," as a natural and factual embodiment of positive traits and ideals. His ability to explicitly identify a white culture is predicated on a comparison to what it is not, black culture. Gibson lamented that in order for more white men to be interested in marrying black women, "Blacks would have to stop living together in bad neighborhoods and start valuing education." In this quote, Gibson also located a racialized residential space. He implied that spaces that are commonly confined by all blacks are inherently bad, but if black women live in residential spaces that are predominantly white, he implies that these neighborhoods are not inherently bad, and consequently black women will value education. Gibson's quote also ignored the role of entrenched racism that creates and maintains racially segregated neighborhoods after the end of legal segregation. Discriminatory real estate and lending markets, red lining, and discrimination in the price of credit and interest rates mean that it is more difficult for blacks to be homeowners and that there is a forced concentration of black poverty in allocated residential areas with a concentration of poor public services, poor schooling, and a poor value for real estate (Shapiro 2004). Additionally, the black poor are the most isolated of all racial groups in poverty, particularly as whites (as well as other racial groups) avoid purchasing homes or residing in areas that are "designated" as black (Shapiro 2004). Thus, Gibson's implication that blacks choose to

live in isolated areas and can thus so easily choose not to live in isolated areas is a problematic viewpoint, but one that comes from the lens of the deep frame, rooted in the notion of a defunct black culture.

Caleb, a lower middle class male from Illinois in his 20s, also described black culture as problematic. Expressing that he feels he cannot find his ideal woman within black women, he stated, "...All that I have met act in ways that I find repulsive..." He extended this thought, stating:

It is possible that a black woman from a different culture may act in a different way, which would make a big difference. I find the current trends in black culture repulsive.

Caleb was the only respondent who made mention of black women with a "different" culture, a black woman possibly from another country, as having an acceptable "black culture." However, Caleb, like several other respondents, explicitly stated that he views the black culture of America as "repulsive." Like most other respondents, he has had very few personal interactions with black women but does describe himself as having two close female friends, one of which he admitted to having "casual sexual relations with." Although Caleb has a totalizing view of black women as engaging in "repulsive" behavior from a "repulsive" black culture and although he stated he would never marry a black woman, he has had a sexual relationship with a black woman, which he stated is the type of relationship he would most likely seek with black women (I discuss this dualism in more detail in Chapter VI). Extending his thoughts on black culture and its effect on interracial relationships, when asked what would need to change for more white men to marry black women, Caleb stated, "Black culture would have to change,

and stop trying to be a separate entity. They would have to act more like a socialized American society.” He provided an interpretation that blacks purposely “separate” themselves from the broader society. As with other respondents, he did not express an understanding that blacks historically and presently have been treated as and forced to be separate in society, both in an explicit and a de-facto fashion. Thus, as a form of resistance, blacks, and black women in particular, have had to carve their own identity and safe space in society. In his assertion that black women would have to become better socialized Americans, Caleb, like Roger, makes whiteness invisible by using American. However, inherent in what is American is whiteness and white culture. Holding a similar view, Thomas, who is in his 40s, middle class, and from Texas, also believes that he cannot find his ideal woman in black women. He stated:

...I find the "black" race to be, in general, morally corrupt as well as culturally & intellectually defunct. Unfortunately, other races have chosen to emulate the behavior of the black race vs. working to assimilate the black race into the common American, Euro-centric culture

Thomas, relying on conventional deep frame notions of black intellectual and moral inferiority, explicitly named American culture as Eurocentric. Like the other respondents, he viewed black culture as problematic and places the solution to what he defined as the “defunct” and “corrupt” “behavior” of blacks in the assimilation of blacks to white culture. There has long been a “culture of poverty” argument espoused by white commentators and whites in general. The culture of poverty argument, which has specifically been geared at poor blacks, is rooted in a notion that faulty values and behavior, commonly noted as “immorality,” “broken families,” “delinquency,” and a

lack of “work ethic,” as opposed to economic issues, are the root of poor blacks’ problems. However, this inaccurate argument ignores “centuries of structural discrimination and socioeconomic factors” and instead places the blame solely on poor blacks (Feagin and Feagin 2007: 185). Although this argument has predominantly been used to explain the culture of “poor blacks,” derogatively termed the black “underclass,” many of the respondents in this section used this fictitious notion of supposed “bad” cultural behavior and values of poor blacks to represent “black culture” in its totality.

BURDENSOME USURPERS AND HARDWORKING BOOTSTRAPPERS

A central narrative used by some respondents was that of the burdensome usurper and the hardworking bootstrapper. Black women are represented as “burdensome” leeches coupled with a faulty “black culture” and juxtaposed against everyone else, meaning those who are hardworking and live and achieve in life “the right way.” This narrative is representative of how black female bodies have been constructed as welfare queens with uncontrollable reproduction and is central to the deep frame that structures how black women are viewed in society. For example, Greg, a college educated, middle class New Yorker in his 30s, shared his thoughts on black women, juxtaposing the “good” from the “bad”:

In my experience, I have greatly enjoyed the relationships I've had with some wonderful women who have broken the stereotypes and just lived life the way they felt they wanted, instead of the way they felt they should. None of them trumpeted their differences, but still managed to stand out in my mind as exceptional individuals of innate grace and beauty. Not a single 'ghetto-girl' or 'fat black mammy' in the mix, though several may look that way from outward appearances alone.

Greg expressed that he likes black women who do not “trumpet” differences and that break stereotypes. Interesting here is the notion that black women must prove “their” stereotype wrong and/or work hard to not fit within the common stereotype that, according to Greg, their physical looks seem to suggest. Whiles these “types” of black women are fine, Greg juxtaposed them with the black women who showcase ethnic difference and do not engage in proper “American” values and behaviors. He specifically described what he does not like about black women, stating:

I dislike my dealings with the loud, abrasive, obnoxious, wanna-be ghetto or african-continental poseurs who make up for any real knowledge with a lousy attitude and in-your-face obscenity, especially in line at the grocery store. I dislike the ones who have multiple children on welfare by 'father unknown', just so they can collect a check. I dislike the ones who name their children in an idiotic fashion (Tunisia, MGumbe, Propecia, Twardishia) just to seem like they know where Africa is on a map, or in a misguided attempt to seem more 'African'. They're Americans now, and need to grow up 10%. Individually, I look forward to further experiences with women of color who can step past the media-fed role so many seem to fall into, and be useful productive members of society.

Later in the questionnaire he continued, sharing his final thoughts on black women:

Some black women that I have met are absolutely wonderful... I know I've been blessed to come away from those meetings with incredible and unique friends. Still, even in the small town and rural settings that I am used to, I see a large number of black women, young and old, simply unable and unwilling to form relationships with men that last more than a few months to a few years... I don't know the root of it, but I do see it as a major contributor to a continuing 'state welfare' lifestyle where they believe they are entitled to a monthly paycheck, and all the trimmings, so long as they keep churning out children... actual fathers are un-necessary. This needs to stop. I think at the heart of the matter, black women (as a whole, and in the media) need to stop seeing themselves as an oppressed minority, and look forward to building a future, one step at a time like everybody

else, rather than expecting it to be done for them. I wish them luck, it's not easy, but it's doable.

In this quote, Greg provided a bevy of strong views about black women, which are deep frame notions of black women as “undesirable” and lacking in “femininity.” He espoused the central narrative of the burdensome, sexually deviant black women, reproducing at will, and subsisting on government-rendered welfare checks. As discussed in Chapter III, welfare does not provide a comfortable form of living and having more children does not result in a substantial gain in welfare funds. Greg described black women as feeling entitled to a welfare check “and all the trimmings”; this description of welfare is representative of how the limited funds of welfare have been severely taken out of proportion. It is a lack of understanding of what it means to live in poverty and that welfare comes with no “trimmings,” just families trying to subsist and survive. Greg also lambasted black women for engaging in “bad” cultural etiquette by wanting to connect themselves with Africa and by naming their children names that are outside of the white normative standard. This is similar to a few other respondents who expressed annoyance at seeing blacks wearing t-shirts with African emblems or Puerto Ricans carrying Puerto Rican flags. Greg assumes that black “ethnic” names and anything kin to a distinctive non-white cultural identity is unnecessary and even stupid as he refers to such names as “idiotic.” Regina Austin (1995) notes that “uncommon” names bring about “hostility,” as found with Greg; however, she states that black mothers giving their daughters distinctive names may be an act of resistance and borne out of a sense of “group solidarity” and “self-expression.” A common finding of white male respondents was a belief that an American identity should come before any

racial and ethnic identity. Thus, Greg's disdain for ethnic names and an identity derived from anything outside of white America is rooted in the normalization of white culture as the ideal entity, but is also rooted in the need for white culture to control any other forms of cultural expression, particularly black cultural expression that can represent a threat to entrenched white-controlled power structures. It is also representative of the fear of black cultural expression as a symbol of black resistance against those entrenched power structures. Greg ended his quote by advising black women to get over feeling oppression and surmising that this is the root of black women's problems. His advice—simply stop believing you are oppressed and you will not be oppressed anymore. In a classic example of blame the victim, black women are blamed for being oppressed and are juxtaposed against those hardworking everybody else's, i.e., hardworking whites, who live off merit, heed to the American work ethic, and singlehandedly bootstrap their way to the top, one step at a time.

This narrative, complete with bootstrapping white heroes, the villainous black woman who usurps the system, and taxpaying victims, is similarly shared by Andre, a Californian in his 50s who has some college education. Responding to whether he could find his ideal woman in black women, he stated:

In a few yes but [I] do not see black women as a whole being clean with a clean mouth instead of dirty talking all the time. I think most are uneducated and only want kids for welfare honestly [I] think the black race brings down the whole world and will always cost the world due to no education and 5th generation of welfare"

Andre, who has no close black female friends, has had rare interactions with black women, and whose only interaction with a black woman was a sexual affair he had when

he was young, has deeply entrenched views of black women as “welfare queens.” He went on to explain what he perceives as the difference between most black women (and blacks and general) and himself:

Some women really take care of themselves and get educated and like nice things but [I] feel that the most of the black race are too lazy to start at the bottom and work their way up as [I] had to do. [I]n all my schooling and diplomas [I] went to school with very few black men or women for they seem to like not being educated and living on the poor or welfare over and over with 5 kids and 4 dads.

Andre, viewing black women and blacks in general through the lens of the deep frame, also views blacks as burdensome, not just on taxpayers but on the entire world. He asserted strong deep frame views of black female bodies as sexual licentiousness, promiscuity, and pathological fertility that drain society as a whole. Similar to the respondents mentioned earlier, Andre expressed the classed image of the black welfare queen as representing most black women. The welfare system that respondents like Andre referred to is no longer in existence, as mentioned in Chapter III, because the 1996 welfare reform limited welfare to five years and also stipulated that welfare recipients must find work within two years (Anderson and Taylor 2008). Thus, there is no longer a “state welfare lifestyle” or generational welfare that these respondents are alluding to. Here again, this example shows the power of the deep frame, that even after more than 10 years since welfare reform, white men are still viewing black women and welfare in the most derogatory and limited ways.

It is clear that Andre believes that black women have also not grasped the hard work ethic, unlike him, as he painted a clear picture of himself as the ideal bootstrapper

that worked his way up from nothing. He stated that he noticed that he does not see black women at his institutions of education (he has some college), yet he assumes that it is because of black negligence and lack of drive. As an older white male over 50, he does not consider the long historical and present discrimination that has hindered blacks from attending institutions of higher education. He also does not consider the fact that blacks often live in highly segregated neighborhoods, attend highly segregated and isolated secondary schools with poor funding and resources that often do not provide the educational training and background needed to be successful in post secondary institutions.

With the strong framing of society, in such a racialized, gendered, and classed manner, Andre, as with other respondents, noted two different types of black women; he observed that some black women are educated while others are lazy, but that the majority of black women fall under this latter category. Because of the lack of diverse media images and portrayals of black women, the fact that many white males have had very little extensive and meaningful experiences with black women, and the way in which society in most all aspects has been socially constructed in a raced, gendered, and classed manner that places white power structures and dominance as normal, much of what these white men think of black women is derived directly from the deep frame. It is a racialized, gendered, and classed way of thinking, perceiving, and emoting where black women are concerned that often results in white men having an image of a quintessential black woman with very little variance in their minds. Thus, because black female bodies are constructed in such limiting ways, lost is the fact that the numbers of

black women seeking higher education at both the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels are continually rising. Lost is the fact that since 1997, according to the Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy Report, black women have increased their entrepreneurial endeavors. In 2002, of all the black-owned employer firms, black women owned 29%, and of the all the black non-employer firms, black women owned 47%; in contrast, white women owned 17% and 39%, respectively (Lowrey 2007). However, because of the deep frame, the racialized, gendered, and classed tinted lens by which white men often view black women, these positive attributes are denied them. They are lost in translation, as white men attempt to make sense of black female bodies using a limited deep frame of reference.

Riley, an Ohioan and upper middle class respondent in his 20s, holds similar views as Greg and Andre, yet makes mention of hip hop when lamenting black behavior. Responding to what would need to change for more white men to marry black women, Riley stated, “Class and culture other then how terrible the white man treats the black. Get off your ass and work. Life is not some hip hop game where everyone is repressing you.” Riley, who has had few personal interactions with black women and has never dated black women, similar to Greg and several other white male respondents, appears to view oppression as an “excuse,” and in this quote, he reprimanded black women to stop being lazy, which assumedly would increase the intermarriage rate between black women and white men. Riley also negatively equated hip hop with black behavior. Due to the global nature of hip hop music and culture, in terms of its popularity and commodification, hip hop culture in many ways has come to limitedly represent black

culture on the whole for some whites (and other people of color). Specifically, the negative aspects, including the sexualized black female bodies and the misogynistic and phallic-glorifying aspects of the culture have come to represent black culture as a whole. Despite the fact that there are liberating and positive counter-hegemonic aspects of hip hop culture, these forms of hip hop do not get the same type of global mass media attention or production. However, because hip hop is so widely visible with mass production, those negative aspects of hip hop that receive the greatest production have come to provide an overarching and limited representation of black behavior and culture as a whole.

UNDERSTANDING A DISCRIMINATORY HISTORY AND PRESENT

Several of the white respondents in this chapter expressed a discourse that regarded black culture as negative and problematic. With an understanding of black women and black culture through the lens of the deep frame, the perceived problems of black women were espoused as the ineptness of a black culture. Most all negative traits were attributed to a bad black culture, whereby those classes of black women who are “normal” are those who do not trumpet ethnic difference and who adopt normal, white ideals and values. Those other classes of black women are the usurpers and societal burdens, those black women who have been unsuccessfully socialized and have fallen prey to a bad black culture. There is a lack of understanding of how whiteness has been normalized in the definition of rightness and proper values, and there is a lack of understanding or a denial of the historical and continuing effects of discrimination on the lives of black women. It is neither a bad black culture nor a pathological culture of

poverty. While many respondents failed to recognize this, Barry, a middle class Ohioan in his 20s who described himself as having many interactions with black women, including a few close black friends, and who is most attracted to Latina women, expressed a more critical take on discrimination and culture:

They are the same as all other women inherently. However, in our [A]merican culture, due to slavery and an unfair segregation laws in the 60's, [A]frican [A]mericans have been forced to live in ghettos and this treatment still exists to this day. This means, that there are a large portion of African Americans who are still poor due to these circumstances of the past, and due to this, they have assumed a counter culture attitude and dress, also taken from popular media. Although they are inherently good people, they are more predominantly surrounded by poverty than their white counterpart therefore some people will have the view that black women are probably less committed, have sex at a young age, have many babies out of wed lock. This perception, I think, is due only relating to poor black women and not knowing enough educated black women who are identical to their white counterparts with the same education....

In his statement, Barry provided a more critical overview of black women and the experiences of blacks in general with racial discrimination. Although he did not discuss the impact of continuing discrimination today, such as the continued discrimination in housing and education, and the disparity in black women's incomes to black men, white men, and white women, which makes survival a difficult process, he did distinctly recognize the impact of historical discrimination on the lives of blacks, including recognizing that blacks were "forced" to live in poor, isolated, urban areas, as opposed to choosing to live in "bad neighborhoods together," as mentioned by other respondents. Most importantly, Barry identified the effect of poverty on black women's lives, as opposed to a defective black culture.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Embedded in the deep frame is not just a racialized, gendered, and classed notion of blacks, but also of whites. Thus, whites also have a distinct image and knowledge source of other whites [A]as we were able to see with the respondents in this chapter. The knowledge they have of whites in the deep frame was often positive, as the white male respondents viewed themselves as having a “proper” culture, where they use the English language “correctly,” work hard, do not use welfare, and name their children the “right” names. In contrast, many of these respondents viewed the majority of black women as adopting a negative black culture. As mentioned earlier, the modern oppression-blind segment of the deep frame defines a “degenerate” black culture as the source of black problems as well as societal problems. Thus, blacks are reprimanded, by whites, to adopt the positive traits of white culture in order to stop being burdens on society. Important here is the fact that blacks who adopt oppositional and resistant identities to a normative white culture are often denigrated because black opposition and resistance is threatening to white power structures. This chapter is also an example of how, at times, a classed image was implied in white male respondents’ perceptions of black women. For some of these respondents, the “majority” or “most” black women are welfare usurpers. Even James, the older respondent who described himself as having most of his interactions with middle class, educated black women, described his general image of black women as “baby machine[s],” poor, and on welfare.” The power of the deep frame is that despite many of these respondents having limited personal interactions with black women and in the case of James having positive experiences with

black women, the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame is the lens through which they view and perceive black women.

CHAPTER VI

“THEY JUST DON’T DO IT FOR ME”: NARRATIVES OF THE UNWANTED WOMAN

In this chapter, I analyze what several male respondents expressed through narrative: that black women are “just not my cup of tea,” or the operative “they just don’t do it for me.” The idea of black women not being white men’s cup of tea is the focal point of the central narratives or stories white men tell that situate black women as the “unwanted woman.” In the narratives shared by white men, some consisted of a simple statement proclaiming black women as just not their cup of tea, as they found it difficult to articulate just what it is about black women that makes them undesirable. For most others, the narratives implicitly and explicitly detailed in racialized, gendered, and classed terms exactly why black women “don’t do it” for them, reinforcing the deep frame construction of black women as undesirable female bodies. As mentioned in Chapter I and Chapter V, narratives are central to the white-constructed, racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame that white men understand, interpret, perceive, and emote, in regards to black women. According to Delgado (2006:60), “The dominant group creates its own stories....The stories or narratives told by the ingroup remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural.” In this chapter, I analyze a central narrative to the white-constructed deep frame, that of black women as, generally, an unwanted female body.

THE NARRATIVES WHITE MEN TELL

In the narratives white men tell about black women, they ascribe a bevy of attributes to them, such as strength and domination. These attributes, which are often racialized and gendered notions central to how black women have been constructed in the deep frame, are frequently used by white men to define black women as unwanted female bodies. Specifically, the types of experiences white male respondents in this study previously had with black women affected the ways in which they perceived black women and the attributes they applied to them. Generally, those white men with very limited personal interaction and contact with black women were more likely to harbor negative views and to speak directly from the conventional racialized and gendered deep frame, which includes the construction of black female bodies as the embodiment of negativity and inferiority. Those white men who'd had long-term meaningful relationships and interactions with black women were more likely to apply more positive attributes to black women or to apply the same attributes, such as strength, yet view those attributes positively. These respondents were most likely to state that black women are the "race" of women they are most attracted to. However, only 11% of respondents expressed this. The perceptions that white men have of black women are very complex and can often be contradictory, as was illustrated in this study by those respondents that had dated black women, almost always short-term or primarily sexual in focus, and were still open to dating black women, yet held very negative views of them. These views often co-mingled conventional deep frame notions of black women as naturally inferior as well as more modern oppression-blind deep frame notions of black women as

culturally inferior. An important point to note here is that the many “attributes” applied to black women, even those that are seemingly positive, continually inscribe black women as unwanted female bodies and affect the type of relationships and interactions that white men will seek with black women.

The Black Woman’s “Attributes”: Narratives from the Deep Frame—Conventional and Oppression Blind

In expressing narrative stories on the so-called attributes of black women, the racialized and gendered deep frame acts as many white men’s reference. Actual experiences with black women are unnecessary for white men to have very strong racialized, gendered, and classed perceptions of black women because the ways in which black female bodies have been constructed is so pervasive and so central to white men’s racialized and gendered deep frame. This deep frame of racialized and gendered components, by which white men have heard and learned repeatedly from family, media, books, and other mediums, is regurgitated often without reflection or critical analysis; it is just accepted as truth. Note here this response from Mark, a Michigan respondent in his 20s:

Black women are like black people, which are different tha[n] white people. This is not a racist comment (doesn’t that sound defensive?), we are just different socially, morally, physically...etc. This does not mean one is better than the other, just different. I think most of us are attracted to those who share similar values, thus I am attracted to white women. Black women generally have different morals, values and social etiquette than white women, and I don’t find the differences exemplified by black women attractive.

Mark stated that he has had no personal interactions with black women, no close black female friends, and no family interactions with blacks growing up. His only interactions have been through service sector experiences, such as ordering fast food at restaurants. Mark was very tacit and careful in his response to steer from using overtly inflammatory language, and he even provided a disclaimer that his comment was not racist, a disclaimer used often by respondents. However, his point is still clear, that black women are “different” from white women in “values,” “morals” and “social etiquette”; the unspoken is that whereas white women excel in these areas, black women do not. It can even be interpreted by this response that these “differences” might even be innate. He extended this plausibility when responding to why he believes the intermarriage rate is low between black women and white men; he stated, “White men have preferences that aren’t found in black women.” In this totalizing perspective, black female bodies essentially do not and could not possess what a white man wants or desires, by essence of the fact that they are indeed black and will never be white.

Another respondent, George, who is upper middle class, over 50, and from Vermont, also expressed notions, though somewhat more explicitly, of black women having “negative” or “different” qualities from white women. When asked if there are any traits that predominantly represent black women, he stated, “Yes. Lethargy, poor speaking habits, little control of basic instincts.” He went on to say:

From my observations, black women GENERALLY are larger figured, more lethargic in their movements, and seem to lack incentive. Notice that I stress GENERALLY....I am not a bigot, but this is the way it appears to me. Perhaps if I had more exposure to black women, I would see this differently.

George, similar to Mark, expressed that he has had very little experience with black women, has no close black female friends, and has had few personal interactions, although he did date a black woman “briefly”; he stated that he is not open to marrying black women. Clearly, George has negative perceptions of black women, using concepts from the conventional deep frame when he espoused black women as having little control of basic instincts and being “lethargic.” Consider the similarities between George’s comments and Thomas Jefferson’s assertions in his 1785 work *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which Jefferson states that blacks’ existence is based more on “sensation than reflection” and that enslaved blacks had no foresight or reflection, but only sensation and desire. George openly admitted to not having very many experiences or much exposure to black women, yet he harbors strong views with no real material basis. George’s comments show how strongly enmeshed the white-constructed gendered and racialized deep frame is in the minds of so many white males, because despite having very limited experiences with black women, George holds these strong sentiments. This example shows the power of the deep frame and how internalized this deep frame of “commonsense” understanding is in the minds of white men.

Lee, a Floridian in his 30s who revealed that he has had few interactions with black women as well, described what comes to mind of when he thinks of black women:

Just the term "black women" conjures up thoughts of an overweight darkskinned loud poorly educated person with gold teeth yelling at somebody in public. I hope that doesn't make me racist but honestly that's the 1st thing I think of.

Like other respondents, Lee attempted to soften his narrative of black women by offering an “I’m not trying to be racist” disclaimer. However, he expressed strong negative views of black women, despite the fact that he, like the earlier mentioned respondents, has had very few experiences with black women. Lee has no black female friends, had rare interactions with black families growing up, and his interactions with black women only consist of work-related experiences and what he describes as “drunken sex with a gal from Liberia a few times but that’s about it.” In this case, the term “black women” alone acted as a surface frame that initiated Lee’s racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame, consisting of particular images, thoughts, and probably emotions in Lee that are negative. In Lee’s quote, he emphasized that the black woman conjured in his mind is a dark-skinned black woman. Dark skin has been paramount with unattractiveness and inferiority in this society. Lee’s descriptive image of a black woman with dark skin coupled with her being overweight shows that his image of a black woman is what white society has constructed as unattractive.

His description is also classed, as he conjured up an image of a black woman with gold teeth, and gold teeth may be more likely to be worn by individuals in the lower class. Lee drew on the deep-rooted construction of black women as the bad black mother, based on his depiction of a black woman yelling at her children. It has long been considered by whites in society, historically and presently, as Dorothy Roberts has shown in her work that black women (particularly poor black women) are incapable of caring for and nurturing their children the same as middle class white mothers, the hegemonic norm for motherhood. Despite the negative imaging and thoughts of black

women, Lee admitted that he has had rare experiences with black women, which is evidence of how the deep frame, by which black women are constructed in one-dimensional racialized, gendered, and classed terms, acts as sole reference for his perspectives. His only personal experience with black women was “drunken sex.” As with other respondents, Lee may have negative views of black women, but that did not stop him from having sexual relations with them, an integral point that I discuss in more detail in a later section.

Engaging in explicit racialized and gendered discourse directly emanating from the conventional deep frame and ground in beliefs of natural inferiority as well as the more contemporary deep frame that eschews black cultural inferiority is Randy. Randy is a graduate-school educated white male in his 30s who resides in Tennessee. He stated the following when describing the type of interactions he has had with black women:

I rode a bus with black females (and black males). My interaction consisted of their Rude obnoxious behavior, their foul smell and their disproportionate and ugly bodies. This is not a racist statement because I do not judge people based on their race. My statements are my FACTUAL experiences.

Later, when asked if he could find his ideal woman in black women, he stated:

No! 1) smell - a natural musky animal smell that is foul and repulsive 2) lack of bathing on their part, BAD HYGIENE 3) disproportionate bodies, like some sort of mutants, stove pipe noses, grossly obese or disproportionate bodies 4) bad attitude, nasty in-your-face, neck breaking argumentative nasty attitude, the inability to show compassion or care about others, cultural inferiority teaches them the only thing that matters are themselves. 5) the female negro is completely lacking in any semblance of femininity (at least all those I have run into) 6) their HIV/AIDS as well as other STD rates of disease is 10 times that of whites! that's a CDC FACT...check it out before dismissing it!

Randy, aside from his experience riding a bus, described himself as having few personal interactions with black women and no close black female friends, and he has never dated black women. Randy, as with other respondents, posited his comment by claiming that he is not racist. In contemporary society, most whites recognize that there is a “colorblind” ideology—at least this is the ideology outwardly expressed—and a greater emphasis on using “politically correct” language. However, there are some whites, as illustrated by several in my study, who express anger over what they perceive as not being able to express their thoughts about people of color, particularly blacks, openly, in terms of perceived cultural (or even innate) deprivations as explanation of their position in society. Thus, respondents understood that if they were not engaging “colorblindness,” in frontstage settings, their comments or thoughts on people of color could be perceived as racist in a politically correct society. However, because of the deep frame, they may not have truly believed that what they were saying was racist, as they may believe that what they are saying about blacks is accurate. They just knew that they should not say it in frontstage settings, although some may have recognized it as being “morally wrong” to say. Karyn McKinney (2005) in her work analyzing white students’ thoughts on being white, notes that whites will sometimes claim that “they are not racist” because their thoughts are based on their personal experience, using “personal experiences” as Randy does in the quote above, to “transform what might be viewed as prejudicial thinking into reasonable judgment based on empirical data.”

In Randy’s use of explicit discourse, he relies on many conventional deep frame notions of black women as naturally and culturally inferior bodies. Randy’s declaration

of black women as having a “foul” and “repulsive” smell is reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson’s ([1785] 1991:146) ascertainment in *Notes on the State of Virginia* that blacks “secrete less by the kidneys [sic], and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odour [sic].” Extending earlier comments by a respondent in Chapter IV, Randy asserted that black women’s bodies are “disproportionate” and that they are “mutants,” thus explicating black women as deformed, as not even normal. Randy also relied on strongly enmeshed notions of black women as the anti-hegemonic woman, incapable of femininity. In his totalizing view of what he referred to as “the female negro” (notice the use of the derogatory term), he imparts the traits of “bad attitude,” “neck breaking,” and lack of compassion, as explanation of black women “lacking in any semblance of femininity.”

In a stark comparison to the analysis of black women by early European scientists in the 1800s, Randy re-inscribed the black female body as a site of sexually transmitted disease. In the historical past, European scientists made a racialized link between the belief of the skin color of blacks as the result of leprosy and leprosy as a form of syphilis, thus causally connecting blacks with syphilis and disease (Gilman 1985). This notion was further exacerbated by the connection of prostitutes with disease and black women with prostitution, inextricably defining black female bodies as unbridled sexuality and disease. Hence, Randy’s expression of black women as essentially HIV bodies not only embarks historical notions of diseased black bodies, but also directly links black women with hypersexuality. Severe in Randy’s comments is his comparison of black women to animals, when he stated that black women have a

“natural musky smell.” He extended this comparison of black women to animals when he stated later in the questionnaire that the “evolution of the black women into something that resembled a human being” is the only way that more white men would marry black women. Here, he explicitly placed black women as not even on the same plane as human beings.

Lyle, a respondent in his 50s also from Tennessee, followed this same racist logic. Like Randy, he stated that he has had almost no personal interactions with black women, although he described himself as being raised by a “colored maid.” In describing his attraction to black women, he stated, “I have no more attraction to them than I would to any primate. They do not strike me as truly evolved humanity.” He continues this logic by stating, when asked what would need to change for more white men to marry black women, “Some form of mass insanity or a disease which killed all [A]sian, [C]aucasian and [H]ispanic women. It would have to decimate the sheep population too.” As with Randy, Lyle, relying heavily on the old conventional deep frame of black natural inferiority and the non-unity of the races, explicitly placed black women on the same plane as animals and even worse, as he implied that he would choose sheep before black women. Lyle claimed that his discouragement from dating black women is rooted in the “...entire southern heritage” that he “proudly embrace[s].” Throughout his questionnaire, Lyle expressed that white men dating and marrying black women is completely implausible and not even worthy of consideration. He stated:

It was only 50 years ago that a colored boy received a taste of the snake whip for looking at a white girl. This was the way it was and try as they may...people still respect their own race. A better question may be why would a white man want to marry a negro

Although throughout the questionnaire, the majority of male respondents engaged explicit and implicit racialized, gendered, and, at times, classed language, the explicitly vulgar and racist comments shared by Lyle and Randy, particularly the comparison of black women to animals and the expression of black as not even human, represents a small proportion of respondents. An important thing to note here, however, is that explicit discourse such as this continues to exist in society, but it is usually reserved for backstage settings with friends and family members or situations such as this questionnaire which provide a sort of *anonymous frontstage* for racist and sexist expression. One would wonder, with the level of hate expressed for black women, why Lyle and Randy would essentially “waste their time” completing a questionnaire on their thoughts and perceptions on attraction to and relationships with black women. The reason, I posit, is that through this questionnaire (and through other avenues, such as Internet websites and blogs), Lyle and Randy can vehemently project overt racism, without fear of retribution, because of the level of anonymity provided. Whereas in contemporary times much of this talk has been pushed to the backstage, this anonymous frontstage allows another publicly viewed space where views such as Lyle and Randy’s can be expressed and regenerated.

Strength and Dominance: Black Women as Complicit in Their Own Rejection

The characteristics white male respondents perceived as traits that black women predominantly represented, such as strength, aggressiveness, assertiveness, and dominance, were often used as illustrations by respondents to assert that it is, in fact, black women’s own fault, due to their personal attributes, that they are “unwanted,” or

“unattractive” to white men and men in general. Respondents making these assertions often had very few, if any, personal experiences with black women. White male respondents with meaningful relationships and experiences with black women, including serious long-term friendships and relationships, and/or those who reported black women as the women they are most attracted to were more likely to see traits such as strength and independence as a positive attribute as opposed to a downfall. However, those white males with meaningful relationships and experiences with black women represented a small proportion of the respondents, as only 14% had long-term relationships with black women and only 11% chose black women as the women they are most attracted to (and even a smaller proportion of individuals within this group saw the traits as a positive).

An appreciation of black women was expressed by Isaac, an upper middle class male in his 20s from Pennsylvania, who shared what he believes are the attributes of black women: “...I think they are more candid and realistic, in addition to hard working/diligent. They understand that the odds are stacked against them yet they still maintain and [have a] good attitude, contrary to popular stereotype.” This respondent stated that he has had many experiences with black women and has dated three black women, and he described himself as being most attracted to black women. He went on to list what he finds attractive about black women, including such traits as “candor, affectionate, humorous, outgoing, motivated, great work ethic, intelligent, savvy, friendly, slightly conservative.” Likewise, another respondent, Hamilton, a middle-aged Californian, shared an appreciation for what he perceives as black women’s strength:

I hate to project any conclusions or generalizations about traits that are race specific based on my own experiences. However,

most of the black women I know have a great inner strength and confidence. There is a streak of fighter within them, however, that is probably representative of the black experience in this country.

As with Isaac, Hamilton revealed that he has had many personal interactions with black women, has several close black female friends, and has dated three black women. He views black women's strength as a positive attribute necessary for dealing with racialized experiences in society.

Despite a smaller proportion of respondents viewing black women's strength as a positive, for others black women's "strength," as well as what they perceived as a bevy of other attributes of black women, was viewed as disadvantageous to relationships. These respondents commonly shared notions of black women as not only having "strong personalities," but also as being "assertive," "dominant," "aggressive," "attitudinal," "bossy," and even "bitchy." These perceived attributes were directly used by several white male respondents to convey black women as undesirable to white men and as even complicit in their own rejection because they are too strong or too dominant. The view of black woman as dominant was expressed by Russ, a white male from Missouri in his 40s, with a professional degree. He stated that a predominant trait of black women is "...the domination of the opposite gender." When asked why the intermarriage rate is low between black women and white men, he expanded this perception by stating, "We are stronger than the black man on moral fiber. We will not allow any women to run our life." This respondent stated that he has had few personal interactions with black women and no close black female friends, yet here he provided an image of domineering, emasculating black women. According to this respondent, due to black women's "trait"

of domination, white men would not be interested because they rightfully take on their “predestined” patriarchal role that black men are not “strong” enough to embody. Max, a working class respondent in his 30s who resides in Indiana, shared a similar sentiment:

You mostly see white women with black men—I don't know why it is not more the other way—I just assume it is because a black woman wouldn't likely put up with a man they can't take care of. An independent man may scare her. Most black men expect that a black woman will take care of them—I think some black women don't know how to take a man who can work and contribute.

Max later stated, when asked what would need to change for more white men to marry black women, “Black women need to be more 50-50, they can't control everything. They should want a partner, not a puppet. They should want a man that wants to be a part of the family.” Max stated that he has had very little personal experiences with black women outside of work-related experiences, and growing up his family rarely interacted with black families. He has, however, mostly lived in neighborhoods where more than half of the families are black, and he stated that he “recently had his first sexual experience with a black woman.” Max and Russ both invoked an old notion central to how black female bodies are constructed, that of the emasculating black matriarch, a construction tantamount to white men's racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame of reference. Consider Daniel Moynihan's (1965: 30) report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*; he describes that a “fundamental fact of Negro Americans family life is the often reversed roles of husband and wife.” The matriarchal family for Moynihan was a symbol of the “tangle of pathology” representing black communities.

In expressing this long-standing notion of the black matriarch, Max assumed black women only want a man they can dominate and that black women eschew any

man who would essentially want to equally contribute to the household. A juxtaposition was made by Max between black men “expecting” black women to take care of them and an observation that he mostly sees white women and black men together as opposed to black women and white men. Explicit in Max’s discourse was that black women are emasculating matriarchs, but implicit was that white men would expect white women to acquiesce to a patriarchal relationship and similarly black men would also expect white women to respect a patriarchal relationship. However, because black women have not accepted the proper edicts of femininity and are domineering matriarchs, white men are not interested in them and even black men are more likely to seek out and form relationships with white women (than black women with white men) because white women adhere to the principles of femininity. In critically analyzing Max’s discourse, what is unspoken in his discourse is an assumption that black men may not expect white women to care for them and *would* “work” and “contribute,” to use Max’s terminology, in this type of interracial relationship as opposed to relationships with black women. Here Max views black women from the deep frame, where black female bodies are not only constructed as too strong, domineering and detrimental to black relationships, but black women are also historically constructed as undeserving of assistance.

Continuing on this notion of femininity, another respondent, Norman, a college-educated white male in his 20s from Tennessee, expressed what he believes is a flaw that affects black women in relationships in general, and specifically with white men. The following is his response to the question of what he finds attractive about white women:

White females are too large a group to generalize in the US. By contrast: Asian girls tend to either follow the stereotype of

introverted studiousness or fight it with a very particular kind of sorority culture. There are exceptions, but these are two common personalities and though neither is strongly off-putting to me, neither is very attractive, either. Black girls tend (again, with exceptions) to respond to their competing pressures of being independent and not "being white/bourgeoisie" with an individual-centric position of strength, almost aloofness. I do find this somewhat unattractive as it can lead to selfishness, or at least a lack of openness, in a relationship.

Although Norman was asked to respond to what he finds attractive about white women (since he stated in response to an earlier question that he is most attracted to white women out of all racial groups of women), he instead stated clearly that he finds it difficult to generalize white women, yet he finds it rather simple to explain in broad strokes the personality factors that he does not find attractive about Asian American women and black women. Norman revealed that he has had some interactions with black women; however, he described these experiences as being mainly professionally related and interactions based on "friend of friend" contact. Despite minimal personal interactions with black women, Norman espoused a discourse that represented whites with multi-faceted and complex identities that cannot fully be explained, as he could not fully explain white women, whereas blacks (and other people of color) were constructed with one-dimensional identities that can easily be divulged with simplistic explanations. The respondent attempted to posit his statement by stating that his description is "with exceptions"; however, throughout his entire questionnaire, he clearly engaged in a one-dimensional representation of black women as strong, independent, and resistant to traditional femininity, due to a variety of cultural pressures. He continued this line of

thought when responding to whether he believes he can find his ideal woman in black women:

No, I do not...black girls face pressures that white girls do not and respond to those pressures. One of the pressures that they are under is to be 'authentic'. Black high school kids who make straight A's will have 1.5 fewer friends of the same race as white kids who make the same grades. There is a force in the black community that resists academic achievement; it is seen as selling out.. The push for 'authenticity' reaches beyond grades and, combined with a lack of reliable black men in committed, long-term relationships to serve as role models, it results in many black girls being opposed to a soft femininity because it is 'weak'. They don't want to be vulnerable.

Later in the questionnaire, he went on to state:

A culture that opposes 'being white' and has fewer role model relationships results in more black women being constitutionally opposed to vulnerability and openness than women in other ethnic groups. I find this unattractive because it makes any romantic relationship less intimate by necessity. I find these traits equally unappealing in all women of all ethnic groups.

The respondent provided several commonly held white assertions and assumptions, specifically that black girls and black students in general are pressured to not value education and that being “authentically” black means being a poor student and resisting academic achievement. Norman, speaking from the more contemporary deep frame, blamed black culture and its lack of strong male role models and assumed disinterest in education as the reason why black women are undesirable. He articulated that black women’s “inapt” culture leads them to adapt traits and attributes that are “unfeminine.” He did not acknowledge that in a society in which black women face challenging experiences, in which they must spend psychic energy resisting against the negative construction of their bodies, black women’s continued struggle with racism, sexism, and

classism, and the barriers that they continue to face in a variety of spheres, being “weak” or being “vulnerable” has never been much of an option for black women. Positing a central component of the deep frame, Norman views black women’s denial of white culture as the root of the problem, implying that being close to whiteness, in terms of adapting to white culture, ideals, and values, is the ideal. Through this “sincere fiction of the white self” or “deliberately constructed images of what it means to be white,” (Vera and Gordon 2003), Norman extolled whiteness, and the adaption of it, as the catalyst for healthy relationships. By default, being black and the acceptance of black culture by black women means they are less feminine and thus complicit in their own rejection. Here, the message is seemingly that, if only black women simply adapted to white cultural values, which includes a “soft femininity,” then they too could be desirable. Sincere white fictions are fundamental to the narratives that whites who think and interpret from the lens of the deep frame tell, and these fictions are “sincere” because whites are often unaware of any alternative (Vera and Gordon 2003) narrative than the sincere white self. Consider how Norman denies any allegiance to whiteness, even after he has in several earlier quotes expressed white culture as the standard. In response to whether he thinks black women should have a strong racial identity today, he stated:

Absolutely not. I think that feeling a need to be attached to a racial identity is an unnecessary and often burdensome restraint. In 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation immigrants this is not the case because their grandparents' (e.g.) culture will still directly impact them. I do not feel any need to be boisterous because of my Irish heritage, any need to be nomadic because of my gypsy heritage, or any need to be punctual because of my German heritage. I am partly the result of my family, of course, I am not bound to any code of 'whiteness'. People should be who they are, not who their skin dictates they should be

The respondent assumes that racial identity is “unnecessary” and even “burdensome”; for Norman as well as many other whites, racial identity is seen as something that mainly people of color have or expressly want to hold on to. Whiteness is so normalized within society and American culture that many whites do not recognize it. Research shows that a typical response provided by whites when asked to describe what it means to be white is that they “have never before considered their white identity” (McKinney 2005: 20). Thus, Norman can honestly believe that he is “not bound to any code of ‘whiteness,’” even as he obscured this sincere white fiction when he earlier equated black women’s opposition to white culture with their undesirable femininity, and thus their undesirability as a partner. An extant “code of whiteness” is that whiteness is built into most all cultural components of society. Other racial and ethnic groups must embrace whiteness, and those groups that do not are viewed as not possessing the most desirable traits. Thus, whiteness as power is made so invisible by the deep frame, which acts as a commonsense frame of understanding, analyzing, interpreting, and emoting, that Norman did not even realize that as he denounced being bound to a code of whiteness, he directly engaged whiteness as the norm black women must acquiesce to. Whiteness is so normalized that he did not recognize that there could be any other alternative.

Jeff, an upper middle class white male in his 30s from Tennessee, also expressed a view of black women as having inordinate “strength.” He, too, viewed this strength as a detriment to the type of relationships that black women can form. Jeff, who stated that

he has had very little personal interactions with black women outside of work-related experiences, took a different, yet similar, perspective to Norman:

Not trying to be racist, but so many black women are angry, many times for good reason as the lack of responsibility shown by many black males leaves many women of color with a burden, but black women seem to take so much pride in being a "strong black woman" that it comes at the price of relations with other people..I have had too many black male friends to count, by only have 1 women I can claim

Jeff noted that black women have experienced difficulties in relationships with black men and that they have a right to be angry about those experiences. It is true that black women's intraracial relationships have faced peril, including the high mortality and incarceration rates of black men and the effect that black men's interracial marriage rates have had on black intraracial relationships (Crowder and Tolnay 2000) resulting in a higher likelihood of black women, than other racial groups, to be single, never married, and single mothers. Although Jeff gave a limited license to black women to be angry about various relationship experiences they have had with black men, by the next sentence he essentially revoked this license by abhorring black women's "strength," which can be a resistance strategy to deal with a variety of experiences they have encountered in the relationship sphere and in their life in general. As discussed in Chapter III, black female bodies have been constructed as a site of unrequited strength by whites, but this was to benefit a slavery economy and a legally segregated economy that thrived on black female child birth and free or cheap labor. Being strong was often the only option afforded black women; thus, black women have had to be strong in order to survive, cope, and resist, whether within the broader white society or within their own

black communities. And although fully embracing the indelible strength of long suffering and endurance has detrimental effects on black women's health and peace of mind (Jones and Shorter-Gooden 2003), it has been a more than adequate survival method and one that many black women are unapologetically proud of.

In his statement, Jeff blamed black women's strength for their undesirability; more specifically he blamed black women for stepping outside of the bounds of feminine notions and using strength, as opposed to weakness, for survival. Jeff held to a long-standing notion that women, in order to make themselves available and attractive to men, must not be too strong or too independent; otherwise, men will be unneeded. From a Foucauldian perspective, where power is not just repressive but is everywhere in society, including the body, which is as an "object" and "target" of power (Foucault 1977), women are expected to discipline their bodies in order to "conform" to "patriarchal norms of femininity" (Chanter 2006), whether in physical looks or personality and social traits. Thus, black women, even in the face peril, must grin and bear it, must always maintain a modicum of femininity, and must never be so angry that they engage in survival strategies that hover on masculine identities, lest otherwise they be considered unattractive and undesirable. While Jeff admonished black women for not adhering to feminine norms and placed them as the source of their rejection, he made it clear that he is capable of forming lasting relationships with black men, assumedly because of a bond rooted in shared and expressed patriarchal notions of masculinity. Indubitably, Jeff's discourse suggests that the reason for black women's rejection is black women; if only

they embraced feminine norms, then they, too, could be loveable, but because as black women they do not, they are an undesirable female body.

NOT EVEN WANTED BY BLACK MEN

Several respondents throughout their questionnaires made mention of noticing that there were more black men–white women interracial relationships as opposed to black women–white men relationships. The census bureau statistics mentioned in the first chapter show that this trend is indeed true. Some of these respondents even provided their assessment as to why they believed that difference to be so. Martin, an upper middle class male from Iowa, stated the following:

It is higher between black men and white women because 1- status symbol 2- dominance thing (see a lot of black men sodomizing white blondes than white men doing the nasty with black women - just go to any porn site to prove this) 3-more acceptable to be black male, white female 4-present fad

In his statement, Martin articulated white women as the “status symbol” woman, essentially the pinnacle of true womanhood and beauty in society that black men must have. The implication here is that while white women are a status symbol, black women certainly are not. Bern, a college-educated male in his 40s from Virginia, shared a similar notion. Responding to why he thinks the intermarriage rate is low between black women and white men, he stated:

I think that black men date and marry white women because they are considered a trophy for them. It is telling white men that they can get their women. 100 years ago, if a white woman was seen with a black man, she would be beaten and him shot. For white women, it is forbidden, taboo love. It wasn't thought much of if a white man had a black woman, it was just for sex.

Bern, as with Martin, provided a clear articulation of white women as the “trophy” woman, whereas by contrast, it is implicit that black women are not. In considering the deep frame, the way in which black female bodies have been constructed is that of the “anti-woman,” the “anti-trophy” wife (unless they are similar to white women in looks); they are not representative of hegemonic femininity and beauty and have, in fact, been constructed as the opposite. Influential sexologist Havelock Ellis (1927), in his work *Studies on the Psychology of Sex*, intimates, in agreement with German author Stratz, that there is an objective, not constructed, standard of beauty that is “fundamentally” the same throughout the world, by which this objective beauty is found “commonly” and in “perfection among the white peoples of Europe” (P. 40). He states that “savages” or “lower races” admire European “beauty” or “half-caste” members “crossed with white persons” of their race as more attractive than “their own women of pure race” (P. 40). This notion that European beauty is so ideal and a fundamental fact that even people of “darker” races agree, seek to attain it, and prefer it is deeply embedded in societal thought. This, however, is a perversion, as in a society constructed by whites in a racialized and gendered manner, whites have defined it as such that European beauty is the fundamental “standard,” a standard centrally embedded in the deep frame that many whites, and some people of color, come to view as commonsense. Thus, Martin and Bern’s view of white women’s status and worth as trophies is through the lens of the deep frame.

Bern and Martin both expressed an assumption that as black men assert patriarchal power, considering as they now have more of an opportunity to do so, they

must possess and/or dominate women, white women, the women of white men, who hold the greatest patriarchal authority in society. This argument is a common one. The important point to note here, however, is that white women are continually viewed as white men's property. Bern is also correct in stating that greater attention to "miscegenation" during the slavery and legal segregation eras was directed at black men and white women. The goal here was in maintaining racial purity as well as maintaining white male power through the control and possession of white women and the control and domination of black men (Higginbotham and Kopytoff 1989).

Bern, whose professed personal interactions with black women are limited predominantly to work interactions, expressed the same views on white men-black women interracial relationships as those views he stated previously: that of black women as nothing more than easily attainable sex. He stated, "Maybe I am prejudice. I would be afraid [of] what friends or family would think about me dating a black woman...." He went on to state that he would only date black women under "total secrecy," that the relationship he would be most interested in with a black woman would be a sexual relationship, and that the only condition under which he would marry a black woman would be that "she would have to have a lot of money." In this situation, Bern was quite aware of his prejudicial views where black women are concerned and that what he was saying was not politically correct. For Bern, black women are still only good for closeted sexual relationships shrouded in secrecy; they are women who he should be ashamed of wanting or being seen with in public, white settings.

Taking a different perspective, Jeff, a respondent mentioned in a prior section of this chapter, revealed that he believes that black men and white women's interracial relationships are rooted in the sexual stereotype of black men; he stated:

I think that while i[t] has been more common to see acceptance of black male white female relationships, and it is well known that 3 times as many white women have sex with black men discreetly, the same is not true in black women. [W]hite women mainly are interested in large penises of black men. [B]ut for white men black women simply don't bring enough to the table (Asian women are petite and supposedly more submissive), (Latino women are insatiable and have curvaceous bodies).

From Jeff's viewpoint, white women's interest in black men is supposedly rooted in black men's "physical endowments" and "sexual prowess" (a strong stereotype central to how black male bodies have been constructed), whereas black women, in his view, possess no special or exotic stereotype to entice white men as Latina and Asian American women do.

In addition to noting that black men are more likely to date white women than black women to marry and date white men, which for some is rooted in the notion of white women as the ideal woman, a status symbol and a trophy, respondents also expressed that black women are not treated well by black men. The respondents tacitly implied that black women are a group of women generally mistreated and unappreciated, even by men in their own racial group. Some respondents, in a surprising finding, even extended this notion by explicitly stating that black women are not even desirable to black men. Thus, the white male respondents provided an overall narrative articulating black women as not only not the cup of tea of white men, but also not that of black men either. Lyle, mentioned earlier, a white male respondent who engaged in strong racist

and sexist language, stating earlier that black women are not “truly evolved humanity,” revealed that he believes that black men do not prefer black women. When asked what would discourage him from dating black women, he stated, “Well, society would frown upon it plus why would I date a negro when there is a plethora of pretty white women? Even negro males prefer to date white women...go figure.” Notice here again the use of the derogatory term “negro” in lower case letters, demonstrating that his views are directly from the conventional deep frame.

Tyler, an upper middle class male in his 20s who resides in Kansas, extended on this notion by juxtaposing black women with white women. He stated, “They seem like they are below us. Where black men see white women as a trophy, white men see black women as the opposite. Not even good enough for a black man.” In Tyler’s discourse, he explicitly placed black women as not only undesirable to both black and white men, but clearly as the opposite of white women. His discourse implied that white men get their cue from black men, who are naturally “lower” on the racial totem pole, and thus if black men do not want black women, then why would white men, who are at the top of the hierarchy in power, status, and prestige want them. Tyler, who stated that he has had few personal interactions with black women, ascribed certain traits to black women as explanation for their undesirability. When asked if he could find his ideal woman in black women, he stated, “[N]o, because many black women are loud and lack the humbleness required of a [C]hristian wife.” Here again is a perception that black women do not engage “proper” feminine edicts (as well as the continued regard for a certain type of femininity) and thus are undesirable as a relationship partner.

Skip, a middle-aged, lower middle class respondent from Alabama, shared the following, when responding to why he thinks the intermarriage rate is low between black women and white men: “Because so damn many black women are just domineering and bitchy as hell...” Skip, like other respondents, ascribed “bitchy” and “domineering” traits to black women, traits by which black female bodies have been historically and presently constructed by influential whites, traits that in a racialized patriarchal society have further been used to push black women outside the pale of femininity, and thus desirability, of all men. In responding to what he believed would need to change for more white men to marry black women, he contended that because of black women’s traits, they are undesirable all around:

...The domineering, neck wagging attitudes also would have to pretty much disappear. No man wants that, not even black men. Marriage in the black community between black women and black men is also (comparatively) drastically low. This [is] because black men don't like that neck wagging anymore than white men.

Skip described himself as having had five or more black female girlfriends, and these relationships were mainly sexual. He also stated that for a period of time, he was a sex addict and predominantly “sought out” black female prostitutes. Outside of sexual relationships, he described his main experiences with black women today as acquaintanceships in his current church. Despite limited long-term experiences and relationships with black women, he too defined black women as undesirable to black men, or any man for that matter. However, despite his belief that black women are undesirable as relationship partners, he sought sexual relationships with them.

Roger, mentioned in Chapter V, unabashedly expressed this view as well, stating, “To me, it seems the average black woman is a ghetto, loud mouthed, obnoxious, bitchy, and hateful.” He later stated that this “would be enough to turn any man away.” Skip’s and Roger’s description of black women as the domineering “black bitch” makes it appear justifiable that any man, including black men, eschew black women as a partner, and he makes black women as complicit in that rejection. As Collins (2005) notes, “bitch” is a way to “stigmatize” black women who do not demonstrate middle class ideals of “passivity” and “submissiveness.”

THE COMPLEXITY OF WHITE MEN’S VIEWS: GRAPPLING WITH SEXUAL DESIRE

White men’s views and thoughts regarding black women are very complex, as they grapple with strong deep frame views of black women as the “anti-woman” coupled with strong sexual desires. There has been long-standing sexual desire for black female bodies by white men, rooted in the white construction of black female bodies as possessing an innate heightened “animalistic” sexuality. Thus, while black female sexuality is viewed as “disruptive to the prevailing social and moral order,” it is also exoticized (Haymes 1995) and even fantasized about by white men. These fantasies are an intense desire to “get a bit of the other.” The sexual body of the “other” invokes both danger and resignation, yet is also constructed as a body possessing “more exciting” and “more intense” pleasure (hooks1992). Through black female bodies, white men can seek and release those freaky, uninhibited desires.

The following respondents expressed having generally derogatory views of black women despite simultaneously projecting exoticized sexuality on black female bodies coupled with sexual fantasies, attraction, and desires. Tyler, who was mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter as viewing black women as “not even good enough for a black man,” asserted later in the questionnaire perceptions of black women that further relegated them to an undesirable body. When asked whether or not he would be intimidated by black women, he explicitly declared, “[N]o, I feel like I am better than them.” Although Tyler does not view black women as a desirable wife or as ever representing his ideal woman, he admitted to having two sexual relationships with black women and said that his interest in relationships with black women is of a purely sexual basis. According to Tyler, his interests in the two black women he had sexual relationships with were their “darker skin and sexual appetites.” Despite Tyler’s view that black women are not on the same level as him, or black men for that matter, and are not humble enough to be a Christian wife for a white man, he sought sex with them, inexorably equating darker skin with sexual appetites as if the two were interchangeable.

Consider also Vernon, a college-educated respondent from New York. According to Vernon, black women are predominantly “[l]oud and verbally abusive. Violent and I have been near some that had an unpleasant odor.” Vernon, and other respondents, described black women as violent and abusive, characteristics more commonly used to describe black men but also employed to represent black women. He applied very negative characteristics to black women from the conventional deep frame, despite admittedly having almost no contact with blacks, as he stated that he has mostly lived in

neighborhoods with no black families, has no black female friends, has never dated a black woman, and has had virtually no personal interactions with black women, aside from having sex with a black prostitute. He went on to deem it necessary for black women to have a strong racial identity, because as he stated, “[T]hey are not on the whole desired among other groups.” In this statement, Vernon explicitly shared his view of black women as an unwanted woman by most men in society. Astoundingly, although he described most black women as “unattractive,” he stated that he wished black women were more open to interracial relationships. It is clear, however, as he expressed consistently throughout his questionnaire, that his interest in interracial relationships with black women is purely of the sexual nature. He is interested in fulfilling his “uninhibited” sexual desires with a black female body, as he sought with the black female prostitute. Furthermore, he shared a particular sexual fantasy he has of a black woman:

I like the thought of having a black woman with bigger lips for oral sex. I like the thought of having anal sex with a black woman with a big round butt but she should not be too heavy. I would like [to] give oral sex to a black woman with clear not too blotchy skin.

In this sexualized fantasy, black women’s body parts, their lips and buttocks, are separate from their whole selves and nothing more than engorged, exotic sexual parts commoditized for white male desire.

Comparatively, Max, mentioned earlier, also engaged in a discourse that presents black women as sexual edifices. Max did not express the explicit notions of black women as violent and abusive like Vernon did, but as stated earlier, he did express

strong views of black women as domineering matriarchs. Additionally, while Max revealed that he is open to forming romantic relationships with black women, he is not open to marrying black women, citing interracial children as the deterrent. Like other respondents, he stated that he has had rare personal interactions with black women outside of work and his only non-work-related interaction with a black woman is what he describes as recently having his “first sexual experience with a black woman.” He went on to state that what he finds sexually attractive about black women is their “big lips and soft round bodies.” In a later comment, when asked to share his opinions about black women, he stated, “[T]he darker the meat the sweeter the treat.” In critically considering Max’s discourse, he represented black women as some sort of sexual experiment, some exotic car he took for a joy ride for the first time. This “experiment” of seeking sex with the dark “other” is a way, according to hooks (1992: 23), that whites can “leave behind white ‘innocence’ and enter the world of the ‘experience,’” as it is assumed that *naturally* the dark other is more experienced in the realm of the sensual. The experience with the dark other represents a sort of sexual “rite of passage”; this is especially true from a historical perspective, as young white men, sons of slave owners and later sons of legal segregationists, sought black female bodies for sexual experience. Max’s expressed desire for the “big lips” of black women again represents black women’s body parts as an exotic commodity for intensified sexual pleasure. His projection of “dark meat” as some sort of intensified sexual “treat” is rooted in the notion that the “body of the other” provides an aliveness, a primitiveness, a sense of danger, and a level of exoticized pleasure that cannot be found in whites. The following

respondent, Brent, an upper middle class Mississippian in his 40s, described the thrill of “taboo” sex with black women:

I guess some of the attraction is the Taboo feelings of black and white mixing but I also enjoy the passion; the contrast of black on white sex and the fantasy of being the first white man a black woman might have...

Brent did not apply explicitly negative characteristics to black women as the other respondents discussed in this section did; nevertheless, he revealed that he views black women as a sexual thrill heightened by the “taboo” nature of the sexual mixing. He has dated three black women but stated that these relationships were mainly sexual and that the type of relationship he would most likely seek with a black woman is a sexual one.

These white male respondents, while predominantly holding strongly derogatory views of black women, simultaneously engaged in sexual fantasy, desire, and sexual projection of black women. Many of these respondents may not have even realized that their penchant for “big lips,” their desire for “big butts” for intensified anal sex, and their want for “darker skin” as indication of a heightened “sexual appetite” are a reification of gendered and raced oppression that maintains white domination (hooks 1992) and control over black female sexual body parts in a “commodity culture.” As hooks (1992) notes, these white men may think of this as just simply sexual desire and openness to experiencing the “black other,” never fully realizing that they are perpetrators of racism. Here again, the way that these men view, understand, interpret, emote, and project on black women is distinctly from the gendered and racialized deep frame.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A central narrative of this chapter is the expression of black women as an unwanted female body. As mentioned previously, narratives are central components of the deep frame, or the world view of white men, and ultimately aid in supporting the knowledge domain of the deep frame. In this sense, viewing black women through the lens of the deep frame, which paints black women as too strong, domineering, and bitchy, and even introduces the more vulgar elements of animalism, disease, and inhumanity, several white male respondents have created short narratives that use these deep frame elements to tell the story of the unwanted female body. Not only do these stories paint black women as unwanted by white men but even by the men of their own racial group. These narratives declare the attributes and behaviors of black women as explanation of their undesirability and thus their complicity in their own rejection. However, despite this narrative of black women as an undesirable relationship partner, black women are “good enough” for sexual release, as a central segment of the deep frame is the projection of illicit and licentious sexuality on black female bodies. The integral point of this chapter is that perceiving black women through the lens of the frame, many white men, often despite few personal interactions with black women, ascribe the deep frame attributes to them and easily typecast them as an undesirable “legitimate” body. Through the power of the deep frame, white men are easily disciplined to view black women as undesirable, which subsequently disciplines their interactions with black women. In the concluding chapter, I expand on the disciplinary power of the deep frame.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: THE DISCIPLINING POWER OF THE DEEP FRAME

Power in contemporary society habitually passes itself off as embodied in the normal as opposed to the superior. This is common to all forms of power, but it works in a peculiarly seductive way with whiteness, because of the way it seems rooted, in commonsense thought, in things other than ethnic difference.... (Dyer 2002: 127).

DEEP FRAMES, POWER, AND DISCIPLINE

Power in modern society is not just the process of a top-down ruling effect but, according to Foucault (1977), is also “bottom-to-top and laterally.” Power is not simply a ruling elite welding power from above, but a disciplinary power that is “absolutely indiscreet since it is everywhere and always alert” and “absolutely discreet for its functions permanently and largely in silence” (Foucault 1977:176-177). Inherent in this disciplinary power of society is whiteness, patriarchy, and elitism, which are often hard to recognize or analyze because they are so embodied in the normal, that it is commonsense. White elites have created and legitimized knowledge and meaning systems in society historically and presently, essentially forming a deep frame representing the infrastructure of the mind that is operated in an automatic and unconscious manner, a deep frame that is so embodied in the infrastructure of the minds of whites, and some people of color, that it is simply common sense.

This deep frame, which encompasses textual and visual discourse, smells, emotions, and cognitions, is constantly regenerated through society by whites in power and average, everyday whites who may feel they have no or very little power in society.

Whites, through the social action of discourse, are able to discursively pass on segments of the conventional and modern oppression-blind components of the deep frame. Thus, the construction of whites as virtuous, beautiful, hardworking, and the ideal entity, as well as the construction of blacks as the opposite, is continuously learned. In terms of the construction of black female bodies, whites (as well as those white elites) are able to pass on important components of the deep frame, including emotions and racialized, gendered, and classed discourse concerning black women, through often segregated family and friend interactions (backstage settings). With this research sample, over 50% of the white male respondents stated that they had either been discouraged from dating black women, explicitly and implicitly, by family and friends (and at times by black men) or told negative things about black people at some point in their lives by family members and friends. Those in power, most often white male elites, also have the most access to the media (Van Dijk 2008) and thus the ability to create, control, and influence public media images as well as to control and/or influence the language or discourse used in mainstream newspapers, news shows, and politics.

Consider Tyler, a respondent mentioned in the earlier chapters. He commented on the effect of the media, stating, “[T]he women we see on [C]omedy [C]entral and in [B]arbershop are how we view all women of black color.” Important here is not so much that there are images that may fit a particular stereotype specific to the construction of black female bodies, which is, in fact, problematic, but the fact that there are not a multiplicity of media images showing black women in a bevy of diverse representations. This is further compounded by the fact that even viewing a multiplicity of images and

portrayals of black women in the media does not mean that it will counteract the racialized, gendered, and, at times, classed deep frame, as simply refuting the frame can oftentimes reinforce it (Lakoff 2006b). Moreover, in order for more positive media portrayals of black women to counteract the deep frame of respondents such as Tyler, there must be a frame for such positive images to “hang on” to (Lakoff 2006b).

The smaller proportion of white male respondents who had more meaningful experiences with black women can better understand the dynamics of the media and are better able to resist against the media, which often acts in ways to reinforce the deep frame. Consider Brice, a lower middle class New Yorker in his 20s who revealed that he has close black female friends and has dated a black woman in a long-term relationship. Critically, he stated:

I feel that media, entertainment, and an individual’s environment provides us with our judgment on black females. Having the ability to socialize with females of the opposite sex and see beyond the stereotypes have brought me to respect and acknowledge the beauty and intelligence of black females.

In this statement, Brice recognized that he views many limited images of black women in the media as well as acknowledged the role of the environment, which can include family and friends, on his perspectives of black women. However, because he has had valuable and long term experiences with black women, he has is able to resist against the racialized and gendered deep framing of black women, which is so pervasive in society. Brice’s comments show that there is a level of complexity in understanding the deep frame. People are not just agency-less bodies, they are multi-conceptuals, often having more than one frame, and can engage in resistance against many components of the deep

frame. However, that resistance is often predicated on the type of counter experiences they have had. It is difficult, however, particularly for whites as well as some people of color, to resist against the deep frame because this meaning system is so pervasive throughout most all aspects of society and is normalized as common sense, fact and reality. It is not generally recognized by whites as a constructed knowledge system privileging those in power and maintaining hierarchical race, gender, and class dynamics. The oppression-blind component of the deep frame, rooted in the belief of black cultural inferiority, is widely present in contemporary times (although as was have seen in this study, the conventional deep frame of black natural inferiority is still present) and is integral in upholding race, gender, and class dynamics in a society that today outwardly prides itself on colorblindness and political correctness. This is because whites can state that they are not bigots (as many respondents stated in this research), while claiming cultural inferiority as to the reason for black women's undesirability. The current dominant and hegemonic discourses of the deep frame can treat as factual reality and as normal—not as racialized, gendered, or classed—the notion of black women with black traits as just not as attractive because implicit and normalized in the frame is the white normative standard. Hence, it is difficult to resist a frame (specifically the oppression-blind component of the frame) when it is just seen as fact or opinion and is often not recognized or even conceived of as perpetuating racism, sexism, and classism.

The central power and strength of the deep frame exist in the fact that because racialized, gendered, and classed knowledge and meaning systems are legitimized and normalized as common sense, many whites can develop, as found prevalently in my

research, strong segments of the deep frame. They can effectively view black women from the lens of the frame as unfeminine, as unattractive if they have black features, as undesirable women all around, and, for some, as even inhuman, all while having almost no or very little contact with black women. Consider the fact that some of the strongest vulgar and negative thoughts about black women came predominantly from those white men with the least amount of experiences and legitimate personal interactions with black women. Thus, most everything these respondents felt, thought, and perceived about black women came almost completely from the gendered and racialized deep frame, which holds to the construction of black female bodies in negative ways. It is important to note that white men's thoughts, opinions, and perspectives on attraction to black women, on the attributes of black women, and on black women as relationship partners are often not considered, by whites, as perpetuating racist, sexist, or classist ideals. They are often simply viewed as opinions and thoughts unaffected by outside forces, but based on truth and sheer individualization. However, the racialized, gendered, and, at times, classed views of white men are not "personal opinion about other groups, but a shared group-based attitude towards another (mostly dominated) group, and hence [are] often associated with relations of group dominance and power" (Van Dijk 1991: 38). Thus, the thoughts and opinions expressed discursively by the white male respondents are reflections of existing power structures that aid in the legitimation and maintenance of the power of the white-constructed deep frame.

Outside of the fact that the deep frame shapes the ways in which white men (as well as other men of color) view, perceive, and emote in regard to black women, most

significantly, the deep frame shapes the types of interactions white men have with black women, essentially disciplining white men's behavior where black women are concerned and thus the types of relationships that will form. James, a respondent mentioned in the earlier chapters, showed the disciplinary power of the deep frame in the quote below:

...I have never thought of black women as potential romantic partners, more friends, co-workers, matronly types. Most of the black women I have known were married. I am not racist but I grew up in such a racist environment that I cannot completely shake the notion that black women are out of bounds for a white man...

James admitted to growing up in a racist environment, yet he does not consider himself racist. This is rooted in the fact that he operates predominantly from the modern oppression-blind component of the deep frame, which is integral for those who consider themselves non-racist and "colorblind." Viewing black women from the oppression-blind component of the frame, he did not appear to recognize that he engaged strong racialized, gendered, and classed discourse when earlier in his questionnaire he described black culture as "inferior" to white and defined only black women with "less prominent" "black" features as attractive. For James this appears to be simple representation of fact. Hence, he has not only been disciplined by the deep frame to view "too black" black women as, at best, less attractive, he has also been disciplined to view them as friends, workers, and "matronly" types, a combination representing a modern-day reassuring and comforting black mammy. He has been disciplined to understand that black women are outside of the stipulations of femininity, beauty, and proper culture, and thus he views them as "out of bounds" as a legitimate relationship partner.

The disciplinary power of the deep frame does not operate the same for all white men. For many white men, the disciplinary power of the deep frame may discipline them from forming any type of relationship with black women (outside of friendship or work-related), as with James. However, some white men may be disciplined to never seek marriage with black women. These white men may seek dating in an open relationship known to all, while others are disciplined to keep those relationships private and hidden from close family members and friends, as was the case with Bern, who earlier stated that he would only date a black woman under “total secrecy.” Still others may solely seek sexual relationships with black women, rooted in the projection of licentious sexuality on black female bodies, as was shown by several respondents in this study, yet they are disciplined to not consider black women as desirable “legitimate” partners outside of the sexual act. There are also some white men who may resist against the disciplinary power of the frame and may seek real relationships with black women that are not predicated on sexual eroticization. However, the material reality of the low intermarriage rate of black women and white men, the overall exclusion of black women by white men as dating partners, and the small percentage of white men who have had long-term relationships with black women as found in my research sample shows that it is difficult to resist against the disciplinary power of the deep frame.

PROBLEMATIZING INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE THEORY: REVISITING CASTE AND EXCHANGE

As discussed in Chapter I, the purpose of caste and exchange theories was to provide a theoretical interpretation and explanation of interracial marriage and dating

trends among racial and ethnic groups. Influential scholars Kingsley Davis and Robert Merton used caste theory to explain the differences in interracial partnerships among black men and white women and black women and white men in the United States (as well as other groups). Glen Elder used exchange theory to explain interracial dating and marriage trends, finding that women of lower social status exchange attractiveness in order to marry men of a higher social status. As aforementioned, these theories have received inconsistent support, and have generally been debunked as explanation of interracial dating and marriage trends and dynamics. However, with the recent debunking of caste and exchange theory, some interracial marriage theorists have not provided a theoretical alternative to explain interracial relationship dynamics. For example, in Yancey and Yancey's 1998 study and in Rosenfield's 2005 study, both theorists found no support for caste and exchange theories, finding that these theories were outmoded, and in the case of Rosenfeld found that past support for caste and exchange theories were inaccurate. Ultimately the theorists concluded that caste and exchange theories are outdated, positing that people interracially marry or date based on personal choice, love, and affection, as opposed to status-caste exchange.

The integral problem with these studies is that they do not provide a theoretical alternative to explain the trends in interracial dating and marriage, which was the goal that caste and exchange theories sought to accomplish. While these studies correctly debunk the outmoded usage of caste and exchange, they must also provide an alternative theoretical approach to explain the current trends in interracial marriage, which shows consistently over time, the low intermarriage rate of black women (and Asian American

men) and how this low rate is not as positively impacted by a higher education level as with other racial and ethnic groups. The conclusions of these studies (whether or not the authors' intent) can incorrectly leave one to conclude that "racial" and "status" exchange does not exist and that race dynamics are no longer an integral component in decisions on interracial relationships. These conclusions must be problematized, as several interracial dating studies show the overwhelming exclusion of black women as a dating option by white men and the interracial marriage statistics show the consistently low intermarriage rate for black women over time.

The research findings of this study show that indeed race, gender, and class politics are integral in the decisions white male respondents make on the types of relationships they seek with black women. Often white male respondents deciphered between which women they would form friendships, solely sexual relationships, or no relationships with and which women they would form partnerships with, whether long-term dating, cohabitating, and/or marriage partnerships. The findings of this study show that the majority of white male respondents listed only having short-term dating or sexual relationships with black women. Several respondents, viewing black women through the lens of the deep frame, also projected sexual licentiousness on black female bodies and sought sexual relationships with black women, yet ascribed a variety of negative characteristics to black women such as violence, unattractiveness, and Tyler defined black women as lacking "the humbleness required of a [C]hristian wife." These respondents made clear distinctions between black women as bodies for sexual release as opposed to individuals that they would seek serious partnerships with, whether

through marriage, long-term dating, or cohabitating. The distinctions made by the white male respondents are rooted in the construction of black women as the opposite of hegemonic femininity and beauty and thus consequently as outside the bounds of a “legitimate” relationship partner.

Hence this research, using the theoretical approach of deep frames, rooted in an understanding of the intersecting oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism, provides an important alternative approach to caste and exchange theories. It provides an in-depth analysis of how the racialized, gendered, and at times classed deep frame of white men is integral to how white men view black women and their decisions on interracial relationships with black women. This research further problematizes caste and exchange theories; revealing race, gender, and class theoretical implications that caste and exchange theories are limited in providing. Particularly as caste theory, according to Cox (1948), inaccurately uses caste dynamics to explain racial conflict dynamics, and thus cannot provide a full explanation of the race, gender, and class politics of interracial partnerships. This research also problematizes the conclusions made by the earlier mentioned interracial marriage theorists, providing findings that are contrary to the suggestion that race politics are no longer an important factor in interracial relationship decisions. While race politics may not play out the way that caste and exchange theories suggested, one cannot then assume that the role of race is now null and void. This research shows that race, gender, and class politics do play an integral role in the decisions that white men make as the deep frame of white men, complete with white

constructed knowledge about black female bodies, often disciplines how they view black women and the relationships, or lack thereof, they seek with black women.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEEP FRAME

Impact on Other Relationships

In bell hooks' critical work *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, she provides a critical analysis of the film *Imitation of Life*, which first debuted in the 1930s, and the 1980s film *Choose Me*. Both of these films portray highly sexualized black women (bi-racial) chasing after a white man who does not want them and who easily discards them. The message that both the older and the more contemporary films convey, according to hooks (1992: 74) is that of the black woman who "chase[s] the white man as if only he had the power to affirm that she is truly desirable." This is an important point that hooks makes and one that I would like to stress here. The purpose of engaging this research project was not to seek white male validation or imply that black women must have white male validation in order to be beautiful and desirable. This research analyzes white men because based on their socially constructed positioning in society, as both white and male, they wield a level of power and control over hegemonic ideas in society. White men have played such a central role in the construction of knowledge and meaning systems in society. Influential European males in the historical past were the catalysts behind the construction of black female bodies as deviant and pathological. The racialized and gendered deep frame through which white men view, perceive, and emot in regard to black women is fervently present in white men today, as this research shows. However, the frame is affected historically, as white men today may simultaneously use

conventional and oppression-blind components of the deep frame. The construction of black women as the opposite of hegemonic femininity and as undesirable female bodies is continually regenerated and passed on in society by contemporary white men through interactions with family members and friends as well as through media images, music, political policy, and other important public facets in society that white (elite) men are most likely to control and influence, whether explicitly or implicitly.

This has an impact on all racial groups in society, as not only is the white-constructed deep frame continually regenerated and passed on by white males (and whites in general), it also affects other men of color, including black men, thus ultimately affecting both interracial heterosexual relationships and intraracial relationships for black women. As discussed in the first chapter, black women do not have a significant interracial marriage rate with any men of color. In contrast, white women have a significant interracial marriage rate with black men, Latino men, and multiple race men (Lee and Edmonston 2005). Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans (as well as blacks) are susceptible to and affected by the disciplining power of the deep frame, and thus these groups may also view black women through a racialized, gendered, and classed lens that presents black women as undesirable female bodies, thereby affecting the types of relationships and interactions they seek with black women, particularly for those groups with hopes of moving up the racial hierarchy and seeking acceptance amongst white communities.

In terms of intraracial relationships, the racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame has a severe impact, most significantly in terms of physical looks, as black women

with darker skin and more “black” facial features and hair texture are not just deemed less attractive or never capable of being attractive by white men, but also by some black men and even by other black women. A mainstream example includes the public judgment of the wives of National Basketball Association (NBA) players. I reviewed a website showing both black and white/European NBA players’ wives and girlfriends, where bloggers could leave comments. All the black basketball players’ with attractive wives who had darker skin, a medium-size build, and hair styles without weaves or wigs or without naturally straight or wavy hair were often viewed as unattractive or nondescript; some were even made fun of by the bloggers. However, the same was not said for the black and white basketball players that had white wives that were attractive but did not fit the “supermodel” mode. Those black wives that were of a fair or light brown complexion and had straight or naturally wavy hair were viewed as pretty and worthy of being married to a professional basketball player. Thus, interesting to note is the fact that those black women who were “average attractive” were deemed by the Internet commenter’s (I could not decipher their race) as not attractive enough for the black male athlete they were married to, but those white women who were “average attractive” were considered good enough for the black or white male athlete they were married to.

Another prominent example is that of Usher Raymond, a famous rhythm and blues singer, and his wife, Tameka Foster. There has been much ambivalence towards this relationship (particularly when it initially developed) by fans, Internet bloggers, and tabloids. Some of the arguments coming from black women and men (of which *Essence*

notes some of the harshest criticism coming from black women) against the relationship include the fact that Foster is seven years older than Raymond and is a divorced single mother of two. Others claim that Foster is a gold-digger and is only with Raymond because of his wealth, despite the fact that she has been a successful celebrity stylist for 10 years (Morgan 2007). Most significantly, many of the arguments against Usher and Tameka's relationship are those defining Tameka, who has a dark-brown-skinned complexion and does not appear to have naturally wavy, curly or straight hair, as unattractive and not pretty enough for Usher Raymond. In a 2007 interview, Foster commented on the grasp the non-black standard of beauty has on blacks, stating, "We don't like ourselves. If I were Hispanic, Usher would have the sexiest wife alive. If I were mixed he'd have the sexiest wife alive. But he has a black girl and it's like, she's horrible and she's ugly. Okay maybe I don't fit the cookie cutter standard—25 and a size 12. But this is who he loves..." (Morgan 2007:182). In these examples of intraracial relationships, the disciplinary power of the deep frame affects how the beauty of black women is viewed in the black community. Even as black women and men attempt to resist, often, blacks continue to judge their own beauty against the normative white standard, which in turn disciplines black men and black women on the type of intraracial partners they seek. Moreover, the example of how black and white NBA players' wives were viewed by online bloggers shows the entrenchment of racialized notions of beauty. Whereas many may see black women as experiencing beauty standards no different from white women, this example shows that a white woman who is averagely attractive is still white and still deemed more beautiful than a black women who is averagely attractive,

because a black woman never becomes white, and inherent in the standard of beauty is whiteness.

Black Women's Resistance Strategies

Of integral importance is the fact that an implication of the deep frame and the negative ways in which black female bodies have been constructed in this frame often brings about resistance. Historically and contemporarily, black women have found ways to resist the way they are viewed, perceived, and interpreted in society and have oftentimes attempted to redefine themselves as a source of empowerment. I discuss next how black women have resisted historically and contemporarily.

Historical Resistance. Historically, black women resisted through various means against the negative construction of their bodies as animalistic, sexually deviant, anti-woman, and the opposite of hegemonic white femininity. During slavery, enslaved women did not just passively accept their fate, but many resisted harshly or subtly, all attempting to find ways to fight against oppression. Some enslaved women feigned illness, fought back and endured severe punishment to avoid the sexual abuse of slave masters and overseers (Roberts 1997; White 1985). Enslaved women often did not want their children to endure the harsh life of slavery and did not want to perpetuate the system of oppression that they were bound to, through the reproduction of new generations of black slave bodies. Thus, enslaved women fought against aiding in the exploitative system of interminable slavery by resisting enforced reproduction through the use of contraceptives, abortives, and even infanticide (Roberts 1997).

After slavery, black women continued to resist against oppression and the overriding societal discourse that presented them as licentious jezebels and anti-feminine. Historian Darlene Clark Hines (1997), in her study of Midwestern black women in the early 1900s, found that black women engaged in a “culture of dissemblance.” By dissemblance, Hines refers to the “behavior and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors.” In this culture of dissemblance, black women silenced and at times denied their sexuality as a way to fight against the overriding sexual myths of black female bodies and to gain a level of respect from society. Particular black women during this period attempted to make themselves invisible so that their sexuality was not overly exposed, in hopes of garnering themselves protections against their invulnerability to rape and domestic abuse.

Black women in the early 1900s, wanting to fit within the confines of traditional gender ideology, which decreed that women stay at home as opposed to work, wanted to stay home and take care of the house and children. According to hooks (1981) black women resented the exploitative circumstances that “forced them to work.” However, most black women, historically, did not have a choice regarding whether or not they would work, based on the oppressive circumstances of black women’s lives and a post-antebellum society dependent upon cheap exploitative black labor. However, when possible, middle-class black women stayed home and cared for their children as opposed to working outside the home and attempted to resist pervading notions of them as strong

anti-women who did not deserve the “leisure time” and status of womanhood afforded to white women.

Contemporary Resistance. Black women in contemporary times, as in the past, have not idly and passively accepted the negative construction of their bodies; instead, they have engaged in much resistance and articulated new spaces of self-definition, despite the pervading hegemonic construction that attempts to keep them boxed, limited, and one-dimensional. A central way that black women resist is through constructing a counter-frame, which according to Feagin (2009 forthcoming) includes “cognitive elements...distinctive language of resistance, that are linked to collective understandings about black and white Americans, and U.S. society in general.” In a society that has not accepted black women on their own terms, black women have resisted through the creation of their own counter-frame against normative white ideals. Black women, for example, are defining their own beauty standards through hair, with the resurgence of natural hair styles, including twists, dreads, braids, and naturals textures and the more elaborate hair styling and designs found in popular black hair shows.

Regarding the promiscuous sexualization of black female bodies within the black community, black women have resisted as well. Although some hip hop music and videos have been used as a place to promote misogynistic notions of black women as gold diggers, “hoochies,” and modern jezebels, presenting black women as a smorgasbord of sexual commodities for male desires, and although some black women have used the construction of their bodies as deviant sexuality for economic gain by playing the video “ho” or “vixen,” other black women have used hip hop music and

videos, among other mediums, as a way to resist against the negative imagery and as a way to embrace their sexuality on their own terms. Queen Latifah, a quintessential black female rapper of the 1990s, and more recently a successful actress and singer, is an example of a black woman using hip hop and her popular television show of the 90s, *Living Single*, to resist the construction of black female bodies as sexual commodities to be used and mistreated by men (and women). The words to Latifah's 1990s Grammy award winning song U.N.I.T.Y are an example of that source of resistance as she denigrates men for disrespecting black women through the use of the derogatory terms "bitch" and "ho":

Instinct leads me to another flow
 Everytime I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho
 Trying to make a sister feel
 You know all of that gots to go.....
 But don't you be calling out my name
 I bring wrath to those who disrespect me like a dame
 That's why I'm talking, one day I was walking down the block
 I had my cutoff shorts on right cause it was crazy hot
 I walked past these dudes when they passed me
 One of 'em felt my booty, he was nasty
 I turned around red, somebody was catching the wrath
 Then the little one said (Yeah me bitch) and laughed
 Since he was with his boys he tried to break fly
 Huh, I punched him dead in his eye and said 'Who you calling a
 bitch?' (Latifah 1993)

In this song, Latifah poignantly articulates how black women are deserving of respect, and she calls for black women to stand up for themselves and to refuse to accept disrespect, belittling, and the commodification of their bodies.

Other ways in which black women resist or more centrally attempt to survive and cope in a society that constructs black female bodies negatively is through what Charisse

Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden (2003) refer to as “shifting.” Jones and Shorter-Gooden developed this concept in their “African American Women’s Voices Project,” which analyzed black women’s experiences of racism and sexism through the narratives of black women. Shifting, according to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003:61), occurs when “African American women change the way they think of things or the expectations they have for themselves. Or they alter their outer appearance. They modify their speech. They shift in one direction at work...then another at home...They adjust the way they act in one context for another.” Black women shift in a variety of ways in order to cope as well as resist against the oppressive way their femininity has been constructed. Black women learn at a very young age to shift in terms of their hair, in order “to manage society’s limited tolerance of black hair.” Thus, they may change their hairstyles, adapting chemically processed hair, weaves, or wigs, deemed more “professional,” to ensure “that they aren’t immediately dismissed based on their hairdos, and that they’re given a chance to demonstrate their competence and skills” (P. 190). Black women also shift when it comes to relationships, because black female bodies are constructed as strong and essentially long-suffering. When it comes to dealing with black men, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) find that black women may shift “out of the way” and essentially silence themselves to let black men be in control. Important to note, black women may also resist against the construction of their bodies as inadequate heterosexual partners with black men, white men, and men of other racial and ethnic groups, by opting out of heterosexual relationships. They may choose other forms of partnerships or they may opt out of partnerships all together.

Centrally, black women cope and resist by shifting with whites, whether on the job or in other predominantly white settings. Black women in predominantly white settings, such as school and work, may shift by watching the way they speak, their volume, their tone, their grammar, their behavior, and they may do more than their fair share of work to avoid fulfilling preconceived expectations of the “lazy welfare mother” or the “unqualified token” (Pp. 150-151). On the job, where black women are most likely to shift as a coping and resistance strategy, black women may shift by silencing their voices with whites (Jones and Shorter Gooden 2003), essentially playing the subdued modern mammy role as a way to achieve a modicum of success and upward mobility. Black women’s shifting as a form of resistance and coping may be explicit, while in other instances, black women may engage in more tacit tactics, such as shifting to either resist against the construction of their bodies or shifting through silencing themselves in order to surreptitiously avoid bringing attention to the ways in which their bodies have been constructed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As mentioned earlier, the white-constructed racialized, gendered, and classed deep frame affects all racial groups, not just whites, although some groups, particularly blacks, are able to resist against the deep frame more because of the longevity of experiences blacks have had in dealing with white racism and discrimination. Thus, for future research that extends this study, I recommend analyzing how Latinos and Asian Americans (and if possible Arab American and Native American men) view dating and marriage relationships with black women as well. A qualitative study by Chou and

Feagin (2008) analyzing Asian American's experiences with racism finds that as a form of survival and to protect themselves from white discrimination, Asian Americans attempt to conform by adopting to a "white racial frame" and adopting "white values" and "political stances," changing their names, and, for some, even choosing white partners (Chou and Feagin 2008). The adoption and conformation to the tenants of a racial frame includes adopting negative perspectives, images, and emotions about blacks. Some past research has also shown that some Asian Americans who have been in the United States for only a generation and have had very little contact with blacks hold negative views of blacks, similar to the views of whites (Feagin 2000).

Similarly, with Latinos, a study by Mindiola Jr., Niemann, and Rodriguez (2003) analyzes black and Latino relations in Houston. The authors analyze how Hispanics and blacks view one another and the differences in perspectives among U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanics. In a particular assessment, Hispanic and black college students listed traits they believed characterized the other group. Mindiola Jr., Niemann, and Rodriguez found that the 10 most frequently used terms by blacks to describe Hispanic females were family-oriented, lower-class, determined, pleasant, dark hair, attractive, long hair, caring and passive. In contrast, Hispanics had much harsher perceptions of black women, describing black women as speaking loudly, egotistical, unmannerly, sociable, dark skin, antagonistic, fashion-conscious, lower-class, ambitionless, and athletic. Of importance here is that "attractive" was not one of the most frequently used terms to describe black women (or black men), while blacks frequently defined Hispanic women (and men) as attractive. Additionally, the

researchers found that foreign-born Hispanics, who generally had less intergroup contact with blacks, held more negative views and negative feelings towards blacks than those U.S.-born Hispanics.

This prior research on Asian Americans and Latinos shows that these groups, many of whom have had very little experiences with blacks, have strong perceptions of blacks derived from the deep frame. Thus, it would be important to engage research that analyzes the views of Asian American and Latino men in the United States, from a variety of class backgrounds, regions, and generations, on attraction, dating, and marriage relationships with black women, and to juxtapose these views with their thoughts on white women and women of their own racial/ethnic group. This research could possibly provide further insight on the power and disciplining effect of the deep frame in terms of how racialized, gendered, and classed knowledge and meaning systems are learned and deeply entrenched in society. It can provide insights on how Latinos and Asian Americans, whom whites have given an intermediate position between blacks and whites, may attempt to better position themselves closer to whites along the white-to-black continuum by distancing themselves from blacks in all interpersonal spheres. This future research can provide more sufficient analysis on the pervasive nature by which black female bodies have been constructed and placed, by whites, along the raced, gendered, and classed continuum, and how that lower placement affects the ways in which other racial and ethnic groups perceive them.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

This study was completed after the historic presidential election of Barak Obama. Throughout the presidential campaign, particularly as it became clear that Obama could possibly win the election and then after he accomplished the great feat of winning, many news and political media outlets, and everyday people, made proclamations of a post-racial society, thus attempting to present a distinct philosophical shift from the post Jim Crow era's profession of a "colorblind" society to a "post-racial" society, where race shifts from being "not seen" to not even existing. This research shows that indeed race, gender, and, at times, class politics continue to be central components in society. In fact, we will always have a racialized society, as long as the power of whites, particularly male elites, is normalized as the commonsense working of society. And as long as the notion of *white* as the ideal and superior entity is normalized within the deep frame of whites (as well as some people of color), racialization and discriminatory thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and actions along raced, gendered, and classed lines will exist.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

Thoughts and Opinions on Attraction and Relationships with Black Women

1. Demographic Questions

- a. Gender
- b. Race
- c. Highest level of education completed
- d. Current household income
- e. Job
- f. Employment or school status
- g. What is your religion
- h. Have you ever been engaged to be married
- i. Marital status
- j. State
- k. Age

2. Experiences with Black Community and Black Women

- a. Growing up, how often did your family interact with black families?
- b. Since adulthood, how many close black female friends do you have?
- c. What type of interactions have you had with black women?

3. Attraction

- a. The women that you are most attracted to are of which racial/ethnic group?
- b. What do you find physically attractive about this racial/ethnic group?
- c. What personality traits do you find attractive about the women of this racial/ethnic group?
- d. Please describe your ideal woman in terms of personality and physical beauty:
- e. Do you think you can easily find the traits of your ideal woman in black women? Please Explain

4. Attraction Continued:

- a. Are you physically attracted to black women?
 - i. Please describe what you do or do not find physically attractive about black women?
- b. Are you sexually attracted to black women?
 - i. Please describe what you do or do not find sexually attractive about black women?
- c. Would you feel intimidated to approach a black woman you were attracted to? Please explain why or why not

5. Traits

- a. Do you think there are any traits that predominantly represent black women? If yes, please explain
- b. Do you think black women are more sexual than women of other racial groups? Please explain
- c. Please share any thoughts or opinions about black women that you have not already shared:

6. Racial Traits

- a. Do you think it is necessary for black women to have a strong racial identity today (Racial Identity: meaning strong connection to an African American heritage)? Please explain why or why not
- b. Do you think you would be romantically interested in a black woman that had a strong racial identity? Please explain why or why not

7. Dating

- a. Under what circumstances would you date black women? Please explain
- b. Has anyone ever discouraged you from dating black women? If yes Please explain whom
- c. Have you ever dated black women?

8. Dating No

- a. What type of relationship would you be most likely to seek with a black woman?
 - i. For example: no relationship, short term dating, sexual relationship, long term relationship, other
- b. Would You date Black Women?
 - i. If Yes: Do you think it is likely that you will date a black woman in your lifetime
 - ii. If No: Please share why you would not date black women

9. Dating (Yes)

- a. How many black women have you dated?
- b. What type of romantic relationships have you mostly had with black women?
 - i. For example: short term dating, sexual relationship, long term dating, long term dating that could lead to marriage
- c. What type of romantic relationship would you like to have with black women?
 - i. For example: short term dating, sexual relationship, long term dating, long term dating that could lead to marriage, etc.
- d. How did your family respond to you dating black women?
- e. How did you meet the black woman(en) you have dated?
- f. What were some of the traits that have interested you in the black woman(en) you have dated?
- g. Have you ever been engaged to a black woman?
- h. Have you ever been or are you currently married to a black woman?

10. Marriage-yes

- a. How did you meet? Please Explain
- b. How did your family respond to the marriage? Please Explain

- c. Do you feel your marriage is accepted by society? Please Explain
-

11. Marriage

- a. Would you marry a black woman?
- i. If YES: Do you think it is likely that you will marry a black woman in your lifetime?
- ii. If NO: Please share why you would not marry a black woman:
-

12. Inter-marriage:

- a. The intermarriage rate between black women and white men is very low. Why do you think the intermarriage rate is low between black women and white men?
- b. What would discourage you from forming romantic relationships with black women? Please explain
- c. What would need to change for more white men to marry black women?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

You have been invited to participate in a research project studying contemporary visual and personal responses on attraction, dating, and marriage relationships in general and specifically with black women. The purpose of this study is to understand what physical, personality, and social traits participants are attracted to and to understand participant's thoughts on black women and relationships with black women. To gather this information, participants will respond to a series of questions and provide their thoughts on several photos. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a male of white, Latino, Native Americans or Asian over the age of 18. The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in interviews with an interviewer regarding your thoughts, opinions, and experiences with black women. You will be asked to respond to a series of questions on attraction, dating, and marriage with black women and to provide your opinions and thoughts on women. The questionnaire should take approximately 35 minutes to complete.

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. The possible benefits of this study include learning current data on dating and marriage relationships with black women.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. This study is anonymous. A fictional name will be used with your information and no identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely. If you have questions regarding this study; you may contact B. Slatton at: _____

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant:	Printed Name:	Date:
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Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:	Printed Name:	Date:
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ONLINE ADVERTISEMENT SHEET

Greetings,

I am a graduate researcher with Texas A&M University working on a research project analyzing, thoughts and opinions on romantic relationships with black women.

The purpose of this study is to understand the thoughts and opinions white men have on physical and personality attraction as well as dating, marriage relationship with black women.

To gather this information, I will need male participants to respond to an online questionnaire and provide responses to a series of questions.

At the bottom of this note I have attached a website link to the online questionnaire. I would greatly appreciate your participation in the study, if you fit the survey criterion white, male, and over the age of 18.

The survey predominantly consists of open-ended questions, where you can provide your own responses. If you decide to complete the survey please complete each question with your honest thoughts.

This survey is confidential and there will be nothing to connect you with this study. It should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete

If you have questions regarding this study please contact B. Slatton at: _____

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

VITA

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Research and Teaching Interests

Race, Class, and Gender
 Black Women
 Social Inequality
 Relationship Dynamics

Conference Presentations

Association of Black Sociologists Conference- Boston, MA, August 2008
Responses to Portrayals of African American Women in Modern Media

Southwestern Social Science Association Conference- Las Vegas, NV, March 2008
African American Women: Stereotypes, Images, and Modern Media

Professional Memberships

American Sociological Association
 Association of Black Sociologists
 Southwestern Social Science Association
 African American Professional Organization
 Graduate Student Association